Violence and The Mirror: Mimetic Theory and Gender Politics in Modern Fiction

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Abstract

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In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961) and *Violence and The Sacred* (1972), René Girard situated desire as determined by the arrangement of social forces and networks in a triangular relationship with the other. In doing so, he opened up an immediate and fascinating avenue into the ways desire is experienced along gendered lines. Furthermore, by articulating violence as a structural result of desire within social contexts, Girard allowed a radical critique of hierarchical institutions to be made from the margins. By examining the works of 20th century feminist authors Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter alongside Girard’s mimetic theory, we come to see the complex social relations and formulations of desire and violence which arise along gendered lines. By this, we can see more clearly the gaps in Girard's theses as they relate to gender difference and the structural, foundational oppression of women throughout history. Furthermore, we can see how two authors who are considered icons of distinct and divergent literary periods share similar themes and political concerns throughout their work, moving in a shared trajectory as they encounter and resolve specific problems relating to gender relations, desire, and violence. Woolf and Carter approach Girard's paradigms of violence and desire from different yet compatible angles, writing as they are from their distinct moments in political and social history. They demonstrate the multifarious and multilayered effects desire and violence has on men and women's lives and subjectivities. In doing so, they critique Girard's theory of mimetic desire and offer alternate ways of viewing women under this paradigm.

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Table of Contents

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Introduction

Violence and desire are integral to our understanding of ourselves and our lives. Both our ability to inflict and our vulnerability to harm as well as the imperatives of what we perceive as our wants and aspirations are defining forces that constrain and shape both personal and interpersonal experience and wider social values. Historians have viewed the 20th century not only as a period of radical ideologies, social and political change, they have noted the increased propensity for violence to erupt between individuals, communities, and nations, suggesting the economy of our desires has been sharply reconfigured.[1] In this thesis I will suggest that a sustained investigation into mimetic theory as it relates to gender politics, offers new insights into violence and desire that operate from the interpersonal all the way up to the social in a relation of reciprocal reinforcement. In this thesis, I examine the works of René Girard alongside Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter. Concerned as they all are with the processes of violence, desire, and with engaging these themes through literary texts, placing these writers alongside each other, in mutual imbrication, offers a new perspective on their work and draws out some overlooked significances. The work of Woolf and Carter stretches across the twentieth century, but they are both equally preoccupied with how men and women experience a culture perceived to be founded on violence and desire. By employing René Girard's theories of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism in reading their work, I aim to show Woolf and Carter effectively deploy and critique a mimetic politics as a means of depicting and subverting male hegemony. Furthermore, I demonstrate how these authors interrogate the gendered dimension of the mimetic process, and investigate the varied means by which women, despite a perceived lack of agency and subjectivity, navigate sacrificial culture and mimetic desire, albeit from the margins.

René Girard, Violence & Desire

In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961), René Girard began to develop a theory that would take him from literature, to psychology, to anthropology, to theology. In this initial work, he examined the nature of desire and the mimetic processes which underpin it. Reading the works of five novelists—Cervantes, Balzac, Stendhal, Proust, and Dostoevsky—Girard demonstrated how in each there recurred themes concerning the sources of desire and its

[1] See Toynbee, Arnold Joseph. *Civilization on Trial*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948. The Woolfs frequently corresponded and met with the Toynbees in the 1920s. Woolf, *Diary*, vol 2, 5 Dec 1920, 18 Dec 1921, 24 March 1922.

mimetic qualities. In each instance across these works of literature, Girard explicates how desire is inspired by a model or mediator rather than deriving from a spontaneous, individual experience. As such, desire is situated in a social context, as desires are viewed as a series of imitative practices stemming from relationships with others. Desire, then, is always triangular in nature, with the subject imitating a model or mediator in the pursuit of an object. Furthermore, culture, from the acquisition of language to the structures of formal education, is assumed and practised through these same imitative acts. Girard would later go so far as to say that culture would outright "vanish" should the imitative propensity of the human race cease to function (*Things Hidden*, 7). Our desires—distinguished from our needs as physical beings, i.e. food, water, warmth—are mediated to us through imitation. As Chris Fleming succinctly writes in *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis*: "Desire is in large part an *act of the imagination*, involving fascinations with objects and figures that possess not only use values, but *symbolic* values as well—rivalries for symbolically mediated objects made possible by symbolic institutions" (11). By situating desire—heretofore understood as personal and autonomous—within a social context, Girard opens up a reading of culture which is both deeply insightful and heavily circumscribed.

A second pillar to mimetic desire is mimetic rivalry: here the model who inspires desire may just as easily be seen as a rival to the achievement of that desire. How this rivalry engenders what is called a crisis of distinctions which necessitates a form of curative violence to end the community-engulfing escalation of violence which results, is the topic of Girard's most well-known, more complete, explication of his theory. Girard went on to interrogate the Oedipus myth in his subsequent work, *Violence and The Sacred* (1972), in order to uncover what he determined to be the mimetically-inspired "sacrificial crisis" which underpins the application of ritualized violence in communities. This violence, which he called the "scapegoat mechanism", is "a transferral of violent undifferentiation" (87) from the community to one victim in a spontaneous act of collective violence. For example, Thebes, beset by plague, turns on its king, Oedipus, blaming his transgressions for the violence the community has come to inflict upon itself: "In the myth, the fearful transgressions of a single individual is substituted for the universal onslaught of reciprocal violence. Oedipus is responsible for the ills that have befallen his people. He has become a prime example of the human scapegoat" *Violence and The Sacred*, 81). His later work, *The Scapegoat* (1982) develops this theory, describing the inherently arbitrary choice of the surrogate victim, and the totality of the mob's belief in his guilt. Like *Violence and the Sacred*, Girard here

examines more fully the nature of religion in the mitigation of violence and the sacrificial underpinnings of ritual.

Girard posits that this ritual murder of the scapegoat is the foundational moment of human civilization. The scapegoat is at once the disease and the cure, with the paradoxical ability to quell the engulfing violence while simultaneously being blamed as its cause. They are "a bulwark against a far more virulent violence" (*Violence and The Sacred*, 116). Destroying these undesirable elements creates cohesive community in a way that no other mechanism may do so in a society infected by violence. Where violence threatens to destroy the entire community, ritualized murder of a single scapegoat is its response and vehicle for self-preservation. "[T]he victim" of scapegoating "draws to itself all the violence infecting the original victim"—his death transforms "baneful violence into beneficial violence", into "harmony and abundance" (99-100). This, for Girard, is the essence of religious practice; religion is the mythic element, the "retrospective transfiguration of sacrificial crises, the reinterpretation of these crises in the light of the cultural order that has arisen from them" (4). It recasts social laws and bonds; it is foundational to the structure and functionality of culture. Violence, contagious and threatening to consume the society in which it thrives, is employed against a scapegoat in order to quell the forces of violence. As such, these violent rites are, almost paradoxically, "specifically designed to abolish violence" (115). It is this judicious use of communal violence and the ritual which obscures these processes which becomes Girard's chief concern.

However, as Girard noted, in relation to the erasure of mimesis and collective murder in Freud, so too do critics such as Marthe Reineke and Allison Weir note the gender-neutral (and therefore implicitly androcentric) nature of Girard's own theory of mimesis and his articulation of the scapegoat mechanism.[2] Women's role as agents within the mimetic process has been largely ignored by Girard, who at times proclaims that women are excluded or exempt without examining what contexts or mechanisms it is that exclude them, or render them less susceptible to the mimetic process.[3] However, Susan Nowak has found traction in Girard's "hermeneutics of suspicion" (20). Her critique takes Girard to task for describing women as inherently less influenced by mimeticism, implicitly placing them outside the

[2] See Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives* (1997) and Weir, *Sacrificial Logics* (1996). The androcentrism in Girard scholarship is perhaps best exemplified by Robert Hamerton-Kelly's inclusion of "women" in a cursory list of "objects" that inspire strife within a community by their inherent inability to be divided "peacefully" (Hamerton-Kelly, 143).

[3] Toril Moi's "The Missing Mother: The Oedipal Rivalries of René Girard" and Sarah Kofman's "The Narcissistic Woman: Freud and Girard" both view Girard's theories as dismissive of sexual difference and, as a result, unable to provide an adequate framework for describing or dismantling male hegemony.

dominant social order but concurrently refusing to acknowledge the widespread victimisation of women under patriarchy, or women as scapegoats under his own paradigm. To quote Luce Irigaray's *Sexes and Genealogies* at length:

> Therefore, could it not be argued that the hidden sacrifice is in fact this *extradition*, this ban on women's participation in religious practice, and their consequent exile from the ultimate sources of social decision making? As long as we live in sacrificial societies, the choice of identifying the victims or the offering and of ways of carrying out the ritual are essential, both in the short and long term. Yet women play no part in these. Does that mean women have no concerns in all this? That is possible. But there are no other societies available to women, at least for the time being. Thus women are *drawn back into a social system that is determined by sacrifice*. (78)

Similarly, Tina Beattie arrives at the core of my own inquiry with her question concerning Girard's lack of gendered readings: "One has to ask why women are marginal to societies whose social cohesion depends upon sacrificial violence" (211). But in this vital disconnect, a new articulation may be formed; this double role of women as both necessary to and excluded from the dominant social order may be understood as a key to understating women's place within Girard's theories of mimetic desire and its effects, which include mimetic rivalry and the sacrificial crisis. Just as Girard examines Freud in relation to Proust in "Narcissism: The Freudian Myth Demythified by Proust" (1978), arguing that literature may be used as a critical lens focussed on established theory as much as the reverse, so I attempt, in this thesis, to read Girard through two acknowledged experimental writers, in some ways iconic figures of the woman writer as insider and outsider within modernism and postmodernism respectively: these are the 20th century novelists Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter. The reading of them is intended to rectify Girard's inadequate position on gender within his own theories. As Girard paid such careful attention to the semiotics and patterns of literary works in his own research as a literary theorist, so his framework of analysis may be focused, as it were, upon his own theories.

Woolf and Carter approach Girard's paradigms of violence and desire from different yet compatible angles, writing as they did from distinct moments in political and social history. However, both authors engage with violence and desire as they understand these forces, demonstrating the multifarious and multilayered effects both have on men and women's lives, subjectivities, and trajectories. Both do so through a gendered lens, writing from the margins, which Girard and his disciples have rarely addressed in their work. In doing so, they might be read as providing a radical critique of the terms of Girard's model and thereby offering alternative ways of viewing women under this paradigm, as well as the means by which that paradigm might be undermined.

Virginia Woolf and Violence

> This difference I think arose from the fact that I was quite unable to deal with the pain of discovering that people hurt each other; that a man I had seen had killed himself. The sense of horror held me powerless. But in the case of the flower I found a reason; and was thus able to deal with the sensation. I was not powerless. (*Moments,* 85)

Writing long before Girard would formulate his theories, Woolf anticipated many of his ideas in her own work; with her noted critical eye on the prescriptive values of Freudian psychoanalytics (Abel 18-9), her work might be said to prefigure Girard's own engagement with mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism. The ways men and women grapple with mimeticism and its legacy is addressed sharply in Woolf's writing, in particular through her engagement with violence and its sacral snares as it is expressed across culture through the pillars of empire and patriarchy. Woolf's work is a conscious depiction of cultural inheritance, gendered violence, and mimeticism; her writing, both fiction and nonfiction, sought to expose these mechanisms as the very forces which lead men to fight in wars and bring women to reflect uncritically the dominant culture.

However, in the decades since the acculturation of feminist criticism into literary studies, feminist readings of Virginia Woolf have always seemed to involve the taking up of contradictory stances. For fifty years, Woolf's fiction and nonfiction have been subjected to feminist scrutiny, and opinions have shifted with the rhythm of the movement's political and conceptual tides. Woolf has, in feminist critic Rachel Bowlby's words, "provoked some of the wildest outbursts of indignation and celebration, and also some of the best-trained academic criticism" (*Feminist Destinations,* 35). Elaine Showalter wrote a scathing denunciation of Woolf as a feminist author for her refusal to define or enact a unified subject in her work, ultimately undermining a feminist project towards female subjectivity (*A Literature of Their Own*). Toril Moi, in contrast, made the attempt in the mid-80's to rescue Woolf from the margins of feminist theory in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), where she makes clear that Showalter's "traditional humanism" is the most prominent stumbling block in her misreading of Woolf—where "[t]he text is reduced to a passive, 'feminine' reflection of an unproblematically 'given', 'masculine' world or self" (8). As such, Woolf's engagement with masculine culture is fraught; reading Woolf through Girard demonstrates the highly socially situated position of subjectivity and its relationship to violence as well as the differentiated position through which men and women experience this subjectivity. While this reading does not close off these irreconcilable readings of Woolf, it does question some of their assumptions concerning the nature of Woolf's feminist project.

There have been a few, scattered studies on Woolf's epistemic engagement with violence. In 2010, William Johnsen undertook a study of violence in modernist texts in *Violence and Modernism*, with a particular focus on Girard, and noted Woolf's particular engagement with mimeticism. However, his work lacks focus on or insight into the complexity and variety of feminist discourse since the 1980s, and he ignores the way that Woolf, in particular, has been discussed in feminist literary analysis since the contentious struggle over ideas of Woolf's creative androgyny.[4] Against Jane Marcus's taking Woolf to task over not being angry enough, Johnsen lauds "Woolf's immediate contribution to a theory of mimetic conflict" as a suggestion "that the "fact" of anger must be demythologised in international politics as well as gender politics" (116-7). More generally, Sarah Cole's *At the Violet Hour* (2012) uncovers the literary strategies developed and deployed by English and Irish authors across the modernist period by pursuing Max Weber's concept of "disenchantment" as a cornerstone of modernist thought, viewed as an outcome of industrial modernity (Cole, 40). Rearticulating Weber's model of enchantment and disenchantment in terms of violence, Cole comes to recast disenchantment not so much as a spiritual or cultural loss, but as a demythologising, a de-idealisation of war and wounding, stripping violence of its "symbolic and cultural potency" (43), against the "enchanted desire" to make the violated, wounded body "culturally productive" (44). However, she puts Woolf alongside authors such as Eliot, Conrad, and Yeats. Even in her introduction there is a tension created by placing Woolf in this masculine literary context. Cole describes modernism as an attempt to revive and restore "classical categories like myth" and reintroduce into literature "heroic wanderers on epic journeys" (Cole, 4), alongside an explicit reference to Woolf's stated aim of writing as a "tunneling process" (*Writer's Diary*, August 30th 1923). Woolf's specificity as woman and as a woman engaged in political writing is ignored, despite Cole's proclamation that she is a "great theorist of literary violence" (200). Cole tracks Woolf's disenchantment but does not, like Girard, read Woolf through a gendered lens. Though this disenchantment—this de-idealisation and demythologisation—is critical to understanding Woolf, Cole's lack of engagement with Girard's work misses Woolf's own highly contextual and keen gendered approach to violence.

Critically, there is a pervasive sense, in Woolf's work, of the tragedy of mimetics. At once terrible and inevitable, the dominant culture and its past enforcers lingers with us like a vengeful spirit; directing our thoughts, guiding our discourse, deriving the present from itself

[4] See Heilbrun, Carolyn G. *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973 and Bazin, Nancy Topping. *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973.

in an endless round of self-repetition. The texts are filled with impressions of people living and dead: personified zeitgeists; ancestors' portraits staring down on their progeny; fleeting memories and visual hallucinations of the dead; rituals performed in their various iterations over the luncheon party or dinner table. Katharine Hilbery's famous grandfather and the mother Pargiter are fading portraits watching over dissolving families striving to maintain a half-fictitious memory of the dead. But then, more benign, comes J— H— up Newnham's garden path in October and Mrs. Ramsay sitting on the step.

It is, at once, imperative—and indeed inevitable—that the dead remain with us, yet also potentially eternally stultifying to the present. And in the period in which Woolf wrote—one of mass death, national mourning, and societal upheaval for men and women alike—the presence of violence is best felt through the lingering bodies and influence of those lost. Septimus Smith and Jacob Flanders, Evans, Andrew Ramsay, Percival—all the young men sacrificed to Britain's imperialist designs. Then there is Nelson's column, the Cenotaph, the Roman settlement beneath the picnicking green. Monuments and reminders, memento moris, the foundations of the present culture. The theatre of war forcing age-old roles on a new generation; the pageant demanding scripted lines written long ago. The dead eternally bend the living to their ghostly impositions. And the women, destroyed by another kind of violence: Mrs. Ramsay, Clarissa's sister, Prue, Judith Shakespeare, The Great Female Poet, lingers in us all, as does the Angel in the House, as does Antigone; deaths in the margins, expected yet still extra-textual. The past comes forth between the cracks of every text.

Woolf's depiction of mimetic desire and mimetic violence runs through her engagement with the past, demonstrating how these patterns and paradigms come to us under the guide of inheritance, tradition, myth, and ritual. Furthermore, her focus on mourning throughout her work is a highly critical engagement of mimetic desire, demonstrating how the relationship we have to the past inevitably organizes our understanding of the present and the future.

Angela Carter and Desire

While there is no evidence to suggest that Carter read Girard, encountered his theories, or dealt explicitly with his work, Carter's continuous and intellectual engagement with violence and desire lends itself to a reading along these lines. Writing from 1966 until the end of her life in 1992, Angela Carter's work is contemporaneous with the social upheaval and radical movements that came to define the second half of the twentieth century. However, American feminists of the time rejected her – Dworkin called her work "pseudofeminist"

(84)—and accusations of collusion and entrapment within patriarchal forms came from critics such as Duncker, Lewallen, Kappeler, and Rubenstein.[5] Most prominently, Carter was charged with reproducing inherently misogynist forms and stereotypes and, through her choice of representation, with being ultimately unable to free herself from established, oppressive binaries that underpin patriarchal understandings of gender and sexuality. Though one of Carter's critics, Kappeler's definition of a feminist critique is one that challenges the self-replication of patriarchal forms. Kappeler defines this self-replication as "the rearticulation of an unchanging archetype, reiterated in the patriarchal culture at large, which recites the same tale over and over again, convincing itself through these rearticulations of the impossibility of change" (146). These criticisms, however, ignore the necessary practice of reflection and subversion on which Carter's investigations are based. Feminist investigations into postmodern literature and theory did not emerge in force until the early 1990s, and Marxist and materialist feminisms saw postmodern discourse as ahistorical or apolitical and therefore unable to adequately address and redress the issue of women's oppression. But a postmodern understanding of reality as a series of mediated constructions therefore allows literary investigations—also mediated constructions—to have political weight (Wallis, xiv-xv). Carter's engagement with violence is explosive, contradictory, and often keenly insightful into the ways mimetic desire entices women to act towards their own self-objectification; while a materialist feminist reading would balk at this, reading Carter through Girard shows how insightful this is, and how necessary it is to understanding how the hierarchy is maintained despite the self-destructive tendencies of male desire.

As Sally Robinson writes of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, Carter's texts "politicise desire" (104). Indeed, Carter's 1972 novel posits the desiring subject as the only true subject, as "I desire, therefore I exist" (121). Desiderio's quest across the hostile landscape of his own desires culminates in a stripping back of this representation to the mechanics—Hoffman's own terrible machine—which demonstrates the violent, pornographic underpinnings of Desiderio's own desire, a mechanism that both produces and contextualises the women he encounters and the violence he commits against them. Along these lines, Aidan Day recognizes *The Passion of New Eve* as demonstrating a "Sadeian" structure of human relations, in which women are used by men to reify, exemplify, or personify male desire. Expanding on this, Charnock points out that "patriarchy itself is structured on this relation: projecting *its* lack on women" while "women willingly subjugate themselves to this

[5] Though these critics mainly level their claims against Carter's collection *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter's use of fairy tale motif and archetype extends earlier than these stories.

patriarchal myth and that, in fact, this subjugation may feel very much like pleasure" (177). As such, Carter's critique of desire is one intimately tied with her critique of pornography in *The Sadeian Woman*, where pornography reifies the relations between maleness and femaleness as socially and historically constructed roles, as "In this schema, male means tyrannous and female means martyrised, no matter what the official genders of the male and female beings are" (24-5). However, beneath this there is a dream of "a reciprocal pact of tenderness" (8) to which Carter aspires. The socially constructed, mediated definition of desire which Girard demonstrated in his paradigm is at work in Carter's novels; as such, Carter's work is highly political and keenly aware of the mimetic nature of desire; whether by a model or a mirror, Carter unveils and confronts the means by which mimesis is instrumental to women's oppression. Carter's scepticism and interrogation of social relations and the means by which hierarchies are maintained and constructed engages in a gendered discourse where men and women are irretrievably lost within these shifting paradigms of desire which separate and abuse them. And, as touched upon above, Carter's work specifically highlights the means by which women engage with mimetic desire and, in doing so, perpetuate their own self-objectification and the desires of the men around them.

The spectacular and mimetic qualities enmeshed within female subjectivity are interrogated at length within Carter's oeuvre. The female characters, including Ghislaine, Marianne, Melanie, Eve, and Fevvers, are all deeply embedded into a system of desire which precedes them and circumscribes them, focusing in particular on their bodies and the marginal position in which they find themselves. Melanie poses in front of her mirror to imitate portraits of women by men and then, later, finds a portrait of herself made by her uncle. The nameless protagonist of 'The Bloody Chamber' sees herself as her husband sees her—frail, delicious, easily devoured—and nearly becomes the latest in a line of victims. Eve's body becomes a site of self-desire as she looks at herself for the first time in a mirror. Fevvers longs for a mirror image of herself reflected in the eyes of the journalist who comes to pin her down and dissect the secret of her wings. Invariably the women of Carter's works are subsumed by male desire and model themselves not as rivals, but as reflections, reproductions, and mitigations of male desire. At once enticing and dehumanizing, these characters struggle against their own desires as they are developed through the patriarchal social constructs in which they live.

The male characters of Carter's work, in contrast, struggle with desire, identity, and communication and, through their use of violence, dehumanize themselves. Honeybuzzard's casual shapeshifting and extreme use of violence continues in the form of Buzz, and Finn,

and Zero; these libertines of Carter's texts are shown to be hollow, individualistic, and unable to sustain any real sense of self in their continued use of violence upon the female characters who, through their mitigation, sustain them for as long as they are able. Carter demonstrates how these paradigms of social relations and these archetypes of desire lead to unsustainable and explosive conclusions which ultimately lead to isolation and death. Far from repeating and reenacting these scenes, as previous feminist readings have charged, I will argue that Carter employs subversive strategies to show how desire is developed, propagated, and inextricably tied within complex social relations.

Woolf, Carter, and Mimetic Desire

The analysis that follows will focus largely on those sites where Woolf and Carter might be seen to converge on particular political articulations of gender relations and mimetic desire. But I will also examine where their work diverges and show how these divergences are separate paths to the same political goal. However, my argument does not revolve around an assumption that Virginia Woolf inspired Angela Carter a great deal, or that one can trace a direct line of descent from Woolf to Carter in any meaningful way. Rather, by writing as women and writing from and about the margins, both authors can be seen to have arrived at a shared critical strategy which allowed them to articulate concerns, criticisms, and politics that are surprisingly in tune. Reading these two authors in conjunction with René Girard's theories of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism yields a fruitful investigation into a gendered mimesis and its role within heteronormative patriarchal power structures. Furthermore, comparing the aesthetics of violence and political strategies of these two disparate authors leads to an identifiable pattern across their work as they engage with similar questions and concerns relating to women's role in a violently-maintained social hierarchy as well as alternate ways of living and being which are intended to subvert this hierarchy.

Despite both authors' engagement with similar themes and subjects, there have been few sustained efforts at examining Woolf and Carter together. One notable exception is Isobel Armstrong in 'Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus', where Woolf's playful depiction of gender in *Orlando* is seen as a precursor and inspiration for Carter's similar engagements across the body of her work. So too there is a brief discussion of Woolf's experimental novels in Magali Cornier Michael's *Feminism and the Postmodern Impulse*. In this reading, Michael identifies key literary strategies employed by female modernist authors—including Woolf— which contained the seeds of a later "postmodern impulse" of

feminist authors of the later 20th century. As she writes, "women modernists' experimentation with form and style is intricately linked to their attempts to delineate a specifically *female* subject" (49). Furthermore, Michael identifies Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" as delineating the difficulties in crafting a subject within a novelistic representation, at once adhering to a mimetic representation found in traditional approaches but also, ambivalently, understanding that this is not necessarily possible (64). Furthermore, in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf suggests that the subject is socially constructed rather than a static essence. While Michael goes on to analyse Woolf' writing as so "narrowly focused" as to "totally exclude the large cultural movements and institutions that necessarily structure individual experience", my reading will situate Woolf's writing as inherently taking place within these larger structures. As socially and politically motivated constructions, Woolf's novels critique and destabilise the processes that create them by writing a female subject which uncovers and analyses the means by which that subject is created and used. She depicts "the realm of the *in between*" (77), in Michael's words; the following chapters will analyse this idea further. Michael sees feminist postmodernist authors as "in many respects reacting against canonised modernism"[6] but they also "arguably build from, rather than react against, subversive strategies within the work of women modernists" (47). Michael sees, as many do, the themes and similarities between Woolf's *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* and Carter's postmodern aesthetic.

However, despite these previous investigations into Woolf's *Orlando* and Carter's engagement with that text, I have not pursued this effort to examine *Orlando* through Girard's critical lens, and with the exception of *The Years* I have not attempted to draw any large-scale commonalities with postmodern aesthetics. This was because I wanted to avoid retreading this already well worn old ground and avoid reiterating the small areas of obvious overlap which Woolf and Carter share. My work here is a wider attempt to recast readings of Woolf and Carter's politics within the same light, rather than a granular focus on the periodization of literary movements and their particular technical achievements, or a highly focused insistence on *Orlando* as an exceptional work in Woolf's oeuvre as it relates to postmodernism in general or Carter's work in particular. Rather, I am looking for commonalities across their general political outlook in regards to violence, desire, and gender. By reading desire as an ingrained social network of inclusion/exclusion which

[6] Michael identifies from the 1940's-50's as the modernist movement associated primarily with a male literary "high modernism" canon (Eliot, Pound, Joyce, et al.) and, quoting Ardis's *New Women*, as "(ostensibly) apolitical formalism" (p. 171)

engenders explosive acts of violence which must be guarded against and occasionally violently quelled, we see how Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter's politics arrive at a similar goal.

Instead, I have focused on Woolf's overtly political texts as they have developed over her body of work, alongside select nonfiction including her polemical texts *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. Likewise, I have predominantly engaged with a selection of Carter's novels and interviews, rather than the short stories for which she is most remembered. While both authors were determined and prolific essayists, the scope of my thesis permits me to focus primarily on their fiction rather than engage with the bulk of their nonfiction writing. Futhermore, while the readings of Woolf here are focused on particular characters, scenes, and passages which demonstrate mimetic desire and its counterpart, mimetic rivalry, the readings of Carter are broadened out to demonstrate how mimetic desire is a thread which runs through the core of her novels. This is necessary for two reasons: firstly, the episodic, character-driven nature of Woolf's modernist aesthetics and literary style contrasts heavily with Carter's repeated pastiche of travel and journey writing; secondly, there has been no investigation of Carter's work using Girard's critical lens, whereas, as I have explained above, William A. Johnsen wrote extensively on *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* in his work *Violence and Modernism: Ibsen, Joyce, and Woolf* (2003), though as suggested without engaging in any kind of sustained gender analysis with regards to Girard's work. As such, the readings of Woolf here are more focused and analytical, whereas the sections on Carter are more descriptive and engaging with the whole text as it unfolds. However, I draw connections between both readings to develop and demonstrate how these authors engage with mimesis within a framework of shared feminist politics. My approach to these authors and their texts is executed to the same ends.

At this point it becomes necessary to define "feminist fiction" as distinct from writing by women, as a conflation between the two is not a given with regards to either feminist writing or women's writing. I will assume Magali Cornier Michael's definition as "written from a specific position assumed in relation to gender and sexuality as cultural constructions", in which the work "actively seeks to disrupt conventions by revealing and subverting the ways in which Western male-centered culture seeks to maintain men's position of dominance."[7] (29). As such, feminist fictions and investigations into feminist ethics are

[7] Michael frequently uses the phrase "male-centered" instead of "patriarchal", as the latter does not, in her view, take into account the multifarious and intersectional means by which Western culture is male-dominated. While

necessarily political, concerned with wider social impulses and constructions than the private or individual. While both Woolf and Carter were sceptical of, and at times opposed to, the dominant feminist discourse of their respective periods and social groups, their work demonstrates a committedly political, intellectual approach to the question of women's social and economic position as well as gender as a socially-situated and highly mimetic construction.

This thesis is arranged across four chapters, which attempt to trace an overlapping trajectory around Woolf and Carter's developing preoccupations with violence, desire and the mimetic. As such, my chapters unfold chronologically and pair what I view as politically and thematically compatible texts, with occasional divergences into the nonfiction writing, interviews, letters, and diaries of both authors, to give greater context to their work. While writing in different times and using distinct literary techniques and traditions, I will show how Woolf and Carter's feminist ethics and violent aesthetics implicitly critique Girardian paradigms as well as formulate methods of feminist political praxis which, while not identical, are compatible in their aims, critical hermeneutics, and methods.

Chapter Overview

The first chapter engages with Girard's basic paradigm of triangular desire as it is demonstrated in *Jacob's Room* and *Shadow Dance*, two early novels of each writer. The chapter introduces Girard's theories of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism and interrogates the male characters through these paradigms. Woolf and Carter both demonstrate the personal and the public means by which desire is organised and cathected through imitation. Furthermore, Woolf and Carter highlight and exemplify the gaps in Girard's theses. With both authors, Girard's theses are treated as descriptive of patriarchal interpersonal relationships, where the "sacrificial crisis" is inevitable due to the unsustainability of masculine modes of civilization and social hierarchy. Woolf's first formally modernist novel depicts Jacob Flanders as the inheritor of a culture that would consume him; his desire is an unconscious imitation of the past and adulation of Empire which leads, inevitably, to his death. Carter's first novel is also examined along these lines, taking Morris and Honeybuzzard as inadvertent and lethal inheritors of a masculinity that will dehumanize them and render them rivals.

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this is a fair reading of the term and an interesting divergence in terminology, I have not made this distinction across my thesis.

Alongside this, I investigate how Woolf's adoption of modernist modes of literary aesthetics and Carter's development of postmodern techniques are both used to further a critique of mimetic desire. However, they both do so in part through a reaction to what they saw as destructive discourses within their respective historical and literary periods. For Woolf, the pre-war European modernist insistence on heroism or mythic inflation of Empire, masculinity, and antiquity had grown out of what she saw as a troubling refusal to see the roots of imperialism which had engendered such a destructive war. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf demonstrates these violent roots of Empire and shows how a culture predicated on the judicious use of violence ends up consuming its own youth. For Carter, the liberatory potential of the 1960's which had promised new modes of social interaction and expressions of selfhood had given way to a licence for men to enact the same social, physical, and sexual domination on women as they had always performed. In *Shadow Dance*, Carter depicts a youth culture which has used this license and destruction of previous social hierarchies, in essence, to rebuild the same structures under different guises. As such, both authors are able to identify and connect the repression of women and the self-destructive nature of male culture as both intimately linked and necessarily causative.

Through these investigations, both novels come to a shared point on the nature of women's roles in the wake of a sacrificial crisis, namely, that they are left behind to reconstruct and resuscitate culture after the inevitable destructive result of mimetic violence. But prior to that, they are placed within a social context which would render them both integral to the operation of mimetic desire while refusing their full participation as desiring subjects. The myriad women of *Jacob's Room*, from Clara Durrant to the chambermaid in Greece, are witness to and caretaker of the frivolous impositions and movements of men but they have no power to stop the encroaching war. Carter makes a similar point in *Shadow Dance*, casting Emily and Ghislaine as liberated women in 1960's bohemian Bristol but simultaneously extensions of Honeybuzzard and Morris's desires, subject to both of their whims. While all of the female characters within these texts are figured as central and necessary within the structures defined by Woolf and Carter, remembering, reflecting, and sustaining the violent culture propelled by male desire, these women nevertheless inhabit marginal positions which severely limits their agency within these structures.

However, though both authors clearly lay the blame on patriarchal power relations present in both pre-war and 1960's England, Woolf and Carter craft a more nuanced position on women's agency and willing participation within these structures. While both authors examine the damaging effects of mimetic desire and the divide it creates between men and

women, they also show the means by which women perpetuate these desires. While *Jacob's Room* and *Shadow Dance* end on bleak depictions of the future, echoing with unanswered calls for help by women abandoned by men, these early novels are starting points for both authors to reflect on the nature of women's role within mimetic culture and how these roles might be subverted. How they do so and what avenues of resistance this marginal position within the sacrificial paradigm may engender becomes the next step in both authors' analyses of this role within sacrificial culture.

Chapter two develops the themes of chapter one, investigating the mimetic processes which underpin the social relationships both within the family and in society at large. However, both authors also shift towards examining the fatal disconnect that arises between men and women in their writings as a result of mimetic desire and prescribed gender roles. Here, I read *Mrs. Dalloway* alongside *The Magic Toyshop*. Both novels concern themselves with women whose sense of self is deeply informed by their social relation to men and male society. Through an encounter with and authentic response to male vulnerability to violence, both Clarissa and Melanie are able to introduce a tentative understanding of mimetic violence and their role within it as a precursor to subverting those roles. While the scapegoat mechanism is enacted in order to reassert otherwise-unbridgeable boundaries, Woolf and Carter attempt to articulate how these boundaries may be communicated across.

In this chapter I use Judith Butler's 2001 essay *Precarious Life* and Jessica Benjamin's 1988 text *The Bonds of Love* as useful counterpoints to the Girardian inspired analysis of the proliferation of mimetic violence. Both bring forward ideas of recognition and response as modes of communication and community which are not sustained through cyclical acts of foundational, collective violence. Butler's position in particular is useful for examining Woolf as she introduces mourning and mourning practices as political and social mechanisms by which we recognise death and create useful relationships with the past, but which are seen to be readily co-opted by nationalist interests to preserve a sacrificial status quo. While Carter does not use mourning or develop a critique of mourning practices the way Woolf does, her depiction of compassion created through a recognition of the other and a shared vulnerability to violence brings her own critique of gender relations under sacrificial culture in line with Woolf's thinking.

While *Jacob's Room* makes a subtle critique of the foundations of violence inherent in Empire, *Mrs. Dalloway* uses this foundational critique connecting Empire, mythmaking, and war to show the tragic relations it creates between individuals and the gulf of understanding that develops. Due to violence as an ontological necessity for the formation of society and the

maintenance of imperialism, there are tangible gulfs of feeling and connection between men and women and between women and their own sense of self. Ultimately Woolf lays the blame for this not just at the feet of Empire, inheriting the tragedies of those doomed civilisations that preceded it, but at the feet of a specific masculine culture that removes women from the public sphere—an act that precludes an understanding between what are, in effect, distinct societies.

But while violence is the point that draws *Jacob's Room* to its close, *Mrs. Dalloway* opens on a community which is attempting to return to the social and political conditions that preceded that violent act. This is shown, through the figure of Septimus Smith, to be accomplished only through a process of intentional forgetting and mythmaking which leads, yet again, to death in a cyclical pattern of mimetic violence and sacrificial crises. Furthermore, communal mourning practices are shown to be co-opted into the service of nationalist and patriotic ideology, which precludes any fruitful understanding of the past and only reinscribes the cultural values which lead to war. As such, Septimus's self-sacrifice becomes a disruptive, communicative death which allows Clarissa to establish an interior, personal revelation on the nature of mourning and nationalism.

The Magic Toyshop formulates a similar personal revelation, shifting from the focus on the brothers of *Shadow Dance* to the formulation of female subjectivity and desire with the character Melanie. Alongside this, Carter introduces the character Finn Jowle as a reconfigured Honeybuzzard; though both fit Carter's description of the libertine unable to express or admit to love as a communicative force in *The Sadeian Woman*, Finn's metaphoric fall from his place as inheritor of Uncle Philip's puppet theatre and his status as scapegoat within the family structure eventually leads Melanie to a place of recognition and compassion which allows Uncle Philip's mastery to be undermined. Here, Carter's lifelong fascination with performance spaces is developed and brought to a keener critical point. The puppet theatre becomes a space, as the cinema and circus do in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Nights at The Circus*, for the re-inscription of hegemonic cultural modes. As a ritualised site—like the middle-class party, luncheon, and dinner table in Woolf's fiction—it redefines the strict boundaries that separate social, familial, and gendered spheres in a continuous re-enactment which involves the participation of the entire family. Therefore, Melanie's performance as the victim of sexual violence and Finn's fall from his position of mastery are paired as a shared vulnerability which, using Girard's paradigm reworked with Butler and Benjamin's work, becomes an act of nonviolent communication.

However, the text ends on an ambivalent note, investigating the bacchanal as a useful means of rebellion. Though a clear upheaval of norms and values, the sacrificial crisis which marks the close of the text and ends with the destruction of Uncle Philip and his house does not, in any meaningful way, establish new norms or non-hierarchical values which are necessary for new modes of being. Just as the performance space is a site for the repetition and reestablishment of boundaries and norms, so does the bacchanal, as it is destined to end. As such, Carter does not establish what might be drawn out of the new communication engendered by Finn and Melanie's intersubjective relationship. Similarly, while Clarissa's experience of understanding in the wake of Septimus's death is revelatory to her alone, it does not manifest in any meaningful, wider change outside of the personal. It is only later that both Woolf and Carter develop a wider, more inclusive critique of the social structures which necessitate sacrifice and which rest precariously on mimesis. However, these texts are important first steps towards an understanding of women's subjectivity and agency from the margins which has the capacity to communicate and understand the violent processes which are obscured by social relations and ritual.

Chapter three discusses the presence of the mother in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Passion of New Eve*. Following from the analysis of gender relations within the sacrificial paradigm, I will examine how the mimetic process affects the mother/daughter relationship and how, in these two texts, the creation and perpetuation of womanhood is fraught with anxiety, myth, and self-abnegation. Both authors express a desire to move beyond the Oedipal model and find new means of articulating and organizing the basic social relationships which define human selves. As I examine more fully in the chapter, the process of becoming-woman, in the Oedipal paradigm, is synonymous with becoming-mother. The violence necessary to maintain this role and this process is delineated and navigated fully within both texts. However, Girard's paradigm cannot, on its own, interrogate the gendered ways in which this inheritance is experienced by women. Though his criticism of the Oedipal model of social relations is plain in his criticism of Freud, I turn to the writing of Belgian psychoanalytic feminist critic Luce Irigaray and her theory of matricide in order to construct a more critical framework. Examining matricide as a counterpoint to Girard's understanding of collective violence against a scapegoat as the foundation of culture, Irigaray puts forward the removal of the mother from history and culture as a necessary condition of both sacrificial and Freudian thinking. In order to engender a female subjectivity, in Irigaray's view, we must reconnect with a pre-Oedipal mother. However, Irigaray's thesis is not used uncritically in

this chapter; with Carter and Woolf's scepticism towards the mythic quality of femininity is their ambivalence towards the mother as a site of consolation.

In *To The Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe's ambivalent desire to become Mrs. Ramsay while simultaneously rejecting her is explored with the aim of reconstituting and recovering the mother from a predatory discourse that would destroy her and render her an extension of the father's will. The relationship with the mother—styled in *A Room of One's Own* as a literary history of women writing as women—is a necessity in order to recover a sense of self uninflected by patriarchal thinking. I also draw from Woolf's 1921 short story 'A Society', which examines—with humour and self-reflection—the role women play as mothers within sacrificial culture. By the end of the story, the notes and papers collected during the pre-war meeting of women deciding whether or not to continue men's culture by having children are dumped in the daughter's lap. In *To the Lighthouse*, the family structure is interrogated in this text, with Woolf constructing and criticizing a traditionally Oedipal set of social relations in order to demonstrate the fraught nature of mimetic inheritance and the failings of masculine culture to prevent violence. By the end of the novel, I show how an eventual acceptance and re-imagining of Mrs Ramsay allows Lily to reconnect to a creative past, finish her painting, and have a meaningful, interpersonal relationship with Mr. Ramsay which is informed by neither the violence of inheritance and mimetic desire, nor the mythic construction of womanhood and motherhood which obscures female victimage.

In Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, the ambivalence and Oedipal necessity of becoming-woman/becoming-mother is expressed in much more literal and material terms; Evelyn's capture and physical transformation into Eve is similarly a metatextual critique of women's literary history and simultaneously a critique of the bio-essentialist feminist movements of the 1970s, which Carter takes to task for relying on mythic images of women which constrain and dehumanize them. Carter uses these mythic constructions of women to demonstrate their falsity; from the multi-breasted cult goddess revealed to be a skilled plastic surgeon to the ageing film star revealed to possess a penis, Carter demonstrates the means by which femininity is constructed and employed. Furthermore, Carter uses the recurring image of the cinema screen as a metaphor for mimetic desire; as a cultural site where desire is played out, enacted, and transmitted, the silver screen and the darkened film theatre become both the mirror for her characters' desires as well as a modern reconstruction of Plato's cave. By connecting modern ritual and sites of communal mythmaking, Carter constructs a compelling argument for how images of women are used as a site of spectacle.

Through the figure of the ageing film star Tristessa—styled both as an example of male transvestitism and a transgender woman—the relationship with the mother is resuscitated from its unending stasis of the glass tomb and recast as a mutual, interrelational, intergenerational encounter. This allows Eve to traverse the desert and, in turn, become a mother herself. This new, multi-gendered, multi-generational birth comes with a re-evaluation of the way women become mothers and a rejection of hetero-patriarchal roles in which the mother is forced to perpetuate sacrificial culture at the expense of an interior self. It allows Evelyn/Eve to transgress and remove herself from the sacrificial crisis presented within the text, and instead of falling victim to or becoming a mirror for its reconstitution, instead moves into a new and unknown territory without hierarchy and without violence.

As such, both authors find it necessary to examine how motherhood is used both as a familial relation and as a role within the mimetic process to maintain and preserve sacrificial culture. The daughters of both texts traverse these constructions and, in doing so, come to a more complete understanding of the mother and a more informed relationship with their own past. These connections are crucial for Woolf and Carter's shared understanding of the political and social history which women must construct from the margins of male society, in order to better critique and subvert mimetic rivalry and the scapegoat mechanism.

Chapter four engages with Woolf and Carter's visions of a feminist paradigm of resistance: Antigone and the New Woman, respectively, and how they are presented in *The Years*, *Three Guineas,* and *Nights at The Circus*. While coming from different historical and political moments within the history of women's political engagement, both figures offer a future to feminist praxis that creates non-hierarchical, non-paradigmatic relationships between men and women and subverts the process of sexual violence which leads to inequality. They move, as I argue, beyond Oedipus and towards the daughter-figures which have inherited the issue of cyclical violence. Crucially, both authors use a feminine, marginal site as a space which may be recast as a site for radical change. Woolf's continued use of mourning as a site of resistance is paired alongside Carter's repeated depiction of performance spaces and the female spectacle. Furthermore, Carter and Woolf both use the novel and these sites of female marginalised spaces as a form of investigative and sustained social and political criticism.

In *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf's lifelong examination of the violent processes that maintain both public and private life culminates in a fixation with *Antigone* by Sophocles. Touching on themes of mourning, gender disparity, post-war living, incest, and inheritance, Woolf found tremendous symbolic weight in the figure of Antigone and used her

to articulate an unspoken, necessary critique of male tyranny and a method of female resistance against imperialism both at home and internationally. Here, I examine the various ways in which Antigone has been read by feminist critics, using Judith Butler's essay *Antigone's Claim* as a necessary framework for reading Antigone within Woolf's twinned texts. With this, and Girard's understanding of violence and desire, Woolf demonstrates the emancipatory and communicative potential of mourning as a way to undermine radically the hierarchical boundaries that define a sacrificial society. Furthermore, in *Three Guineas*, the marginalised are recast as a 'Society of Outsiders' whose coincident distance and integration within the structures that exclude them is configured as a necessary aspect of their intellectual voice in determining the root causes of violence. *The Years* is then analysed for Antigone's textual presence and absence between the characters.

In *Nights at the Circus*, Carter demonstrates a feminine political resistance through the figure of the 'New Woman', a symbol tied intimately with desire, marriage, the working-class, and politics. As such, Carter's construction of Fevvers is one deeply enmeshed within a feminist discourse surrounding the mediation of women's bodies around the forces of male desire and anxiety. Following Fevvers through her self-defined childhood and adolescence, the fiction of Fevvers' femininity and humanity is repeatedly questioned and reflected. Carter's penultimate novel also involves a deliberate encounter with multifarious literary references and philosophical theories. Among these is an intentional depiction of Michel Foucault's panopticon and an unintentional depiction of Bakhtin's carnivalesque. In my reading, both are reconfigured in Carter's work as an expression of mimetic desire. As the text moves further from civilisation it simultaneously shifts backwards in time, uncovering several spaces of ritualized violence before settling on a primal scene involving a literal animal sacrifice for the sake of social unity. Fevvers' disruption of this ritual and a reassertion of herself-as-herself rather than herself-as-spectacle is a poignant double criticism of the place of women within a society in which the foundation is ritual murder.

Though Woolf and Carter approach these political themes using different tools, as it were, they both come to a shared critical approach to the concept of utopia and utopian ideals. The communities which Woolf and Carter examine and obliquely identify as utopian—Creon's protofascist state in the *Antigone* and the community of women who have escaped the panopticon in *Nights at The Circus*—both spaces are shown to be reliant on ritual exclusion and violently-maintained borders. Both Carter and Woolf come to an understanding that a feminist social criticism must be one of radical inclusivity and a conscious awareness of mimetic violence and violent exclusion which typifies hegemonic, hierarchical

civilizations. At the close of my analysis, I demonstrate how Woolf and Carter maintain a shared political development and strategy based on this understanding.

While Angela Carter, Virginia Woolf, and René Girard might seem like strange bedfellows, as we know from Carter's work, if a bedfellow isn't at least a little strange then that bedfellow is probably not worth having. Connecting what are otherwise disparate themes, authors, and projects is one of the few joys open to the literary theorist, something which all three authors accomplished to great effect. In drawing and examining these constellations between Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter, and René Girard, I connect what is revealed to be a shared desire to peel away the obscurant layers of ritual and myth and to reach an understanding of the entirely human, infinitely re-organizeable interpersonal and social relations which teem beneath. To do so is, in all three authors' views, the first step towards effecting change. Furthermore all three authors attempt, in my view, to reach an essential and difficult understanding of the mechanisms and means by which hierarchies form and marginalisation occurs. Girard's demythologising project has been crucial, as Susan Nowak explains, to "expose incidents of clandestine violence and the concealed victims of violence" (Nowak, 21); as such, this clandestine violence which erases, silences, and effaces women from the cultural order and from their own subjectivity is the chief concern of Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter. Alex Zwerdling and Angeliki Spiropoulou expand on Woolf's "small-scaled, mischievous, and ironic" demythologising which has a fundamental "distrust for reverence of any kind" (Zwerdling, 72-3) and which is "committed to exposing the 'myths of the past that survive and are largely responsible for what is wrong with the present" (Spiropoulou, 62). This distrust of myths often works to expose the methods by which women are dehumanised. The fictive and reflective nature of femininity is a theme with which Angela Carter, as well, would grapple throughout her work. As she famously declared, "I believe that all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the de-mythologising business" (*Notes from The Front Line*, 38). This shared project is essential to reading the texts that follow, and it is with this hermeneutics in mind that we proceed. Furthermore, not only does juxtaposing these authors bring to light their shared literary and political goals, but it also highlights the shortcomings inherent in the individual texts and their particular insights. To read Girard through Woolf and Carter might rescue Girard's theory from its inherent androcentrism; to read Woolf and Carter through Girard will show their shared project as feminist authors grappling with the same persistent problem of women's subjectivity and place within a self-destructive culture, despite the decades which divide them.

Chapter One: Mirrors and Mimesis in *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *Shadow Dance* (1966)

Decades before Girard wrote *Violence and The Sacred*, Virginia Woolf sharply delineated women's place within the terms of his paradigm; they "have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of a man at twice his natural size" (*A Room of One's Own*, 3). In Woolf's reading, women have acted as mirrors to men's rivalry in a way that does not necessarily inspire the rivalry itself, but rather acts as a mediator which may bolster men's differentiation as well as valorise them in heroic terms that facilitate violent ends. While not considered to be active, rivalrous agents within the scapegoat mechanism, women's place as objects of desire and as desiring subjects positions them in a unique position to perpetuate and/or counter cyclical violence.

While there is no rivalry with the mirror, it remains an essential aspect of Girard's mechanism: the ability to revive, resuscitate, and restore the world that existed before the sacrificial crisis made the act of collective violence necessary to destabilise the community. Women's relationship to the mimetic process is foundational and, yet, apart: turning women from active agents into reflective objects is one of the violent aims of patriarchy. As Marina Warner explains in *Monuments and Maidens*:

> Their identity is perceived through the eyes of others […] This is the condition of beauty and of being the object of desire, a form of profound Otherness […] At the heart of this web of symbols, where woman as *fons et origo* and woman as a manufactured maiden are assimilated, where woman as original matter and woman as artefact become interchangeable terms in the discussion of the creative act in life and art, we can find the source of the tradition of ascribing meaning more readily to the female form than the male. The female was perceived to be a vehicle of attributed meaning at the very beginning of the world and according to the myths that lie at the foundation of our lives, ever since she was made in all her allure as man's fatal partner. (224)

As Nowak succinctly describes, both Girardian hermeneutics and feminist scholarship "focuses upon the retrieval of the victim from her second victimage, that is, from the relegation of her experience to the abyss of silence" (23). The mythologies, reverences, and rituals that seek to silence victims of clandestine violence are the chief concern of Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter, and may be seen in their earliest attempts to create a voice for that silence. As such, this chapter will focus on the mechanisms of Girard's theories with regards to the modernist and postmodernist techniques developed by the respective authors, as well as how they present sustained examinations into the root issues of the sacrificial crises as

explicated by Girard. Ultimately this will reveal the means by which women's voices are relegated to this abyss of silence. While Woolf and Carter interrogate these conditions as they are expressed in men's culture, they go beyond Girard's androcentric analysis and come to a wider, more inclusive conclusion. They ask what mimesis means to women, and how are they enacted and embodied in relation to the sacrificial paradigm along gendered lines. Just as "patriotism", "sex", and "womanhood" are understood in vastly distinct and, at times, oppositional ways by men and women, so are the mechanisms by which Girard's paradigm is practised. Just as women's relationship to the literary canon and the English language is fraught, so is women's relationship to the social forces that demand sacrifice to sustain themselves.

Even in their earliest novels, Woolf and Carter both engage directly with the themes and processes which Girard would later articulate. Their respective investigations into the mimetic rivalries by which men create, maintain, and destroy civilisation is expertly drawn and indicative of their precise moment in social history. Both Woolf and Carter engage with mimetic theory and the processes by which it regulates and disrupts men's lives and emotional capacity. They approach their subjects, Jacob Flanders and Morris/Honeybuzzard, with a nuanced understanding of what Girard eventually described as mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry. While the foci of both texts are the male characters, Jacob and Honeybuzzard/Morris respectively, their relationships and lives are articulated through a series of women who reflect, validate, and remember these male characters so that the men are able to live their lives relatively unencumbered by self-reflection or awareness of their own mimetic desires.

Though inextricably bound up in the Girardian paradigm of mimetic rivalry, the women take on a distinct role within these relationships in which their agency and desire is abrogated to men's. Despite this, the women of both texts make men's society possible while also providing a potential ability, as liminal agents of the mimetic process operating both inside and outside its operations, to subvert and disrupt mimetic rivalry. However, this process is not a sustainable means to create or even imagine an alternate mode of being for men and women outside of a sacrificial society. Instead, they operate as mediators that absorb, reflect, or mitigate men's relationships with one another. Examining *Jacob's Room* and *Shadow Dance* alongside one another builds an interesting counterpoint to Girardian gender-blindness; far from objects that inspire rivalry, in both texts it is women and their relationships with men who are one of the few means by which the sacrificial crisis may be mitigated.

***Jacob's Room* (1922)**

The Voyage Out might conclude that the only path open to women who cannot live within the marriage structure—one which mirrors in structure and devices the violent imperialism of empire—is death, and *Night and Day* was rightly criticised by Woolf's contemporary, Katherine Mansfield, for ignoring the impact of the Great War on literary culture (Mansfield, 380-1). *Jacob's Room* intimately grapples with the loss of the war and the profound effect it had on literature. It concludes not only with Jacob's predestined death, but the unanswered question of a mourning mother. But violence cannot, as Cole writes, be considered as an "origin", for "Violence leaves its stains, and the long march of years, despite efforts at redemption or revisionism, will often fail to obscure them" (3). *Jacob's Room* was Woolf's first use of the literary techniques that which would come to be associated with Modernism as a literary movement. *In Modernism and The Aesthetics of Violence,* Paul Sheehan contends that modernism is precipitated upon a confrontation with violence and its effects on the body and mind: "The symptoms of shell shock, for example, read like a psychopathological précis of a modernist novel: discontinuities of memory, debilitating and uncontrollable flashbacks, vivid nightmares, hyperawareness, psychic fragmentation, identity crisis, dysphoria, emotional insomnia and the breakdown of language" (171). *Jacob's Room* is, at its core, an encounter with the violence and trauma inherent to empire.

Pre-war European modernist proponents of violence saw it as a mean to restore both this heroism and political ends simultaneously: writers such as Hulme and Sorel, Wyndham Lewis and the practitioners of Vorticism and Futurism all espoused this view; violence was the "world's only hygiene" (Marinetti, 49) in 1909, promoting war as a cleansing act essentially to clear away the detritus and the poisons of the past. It was tinged with misogyny, rejecting "femininity" and "women's values"; Valentine de Saint-Point proclaimed: "Let women find once more her cruelty and her violence" (109). There is an outright rejection of "feminine" values. These cultural movements cannot conceive of a future without collective violence—but women's agency within this violence comes into question at the close of the war. As Woolf investigated much later in *Three Guineas,* heroism is fraught with implications of violence, both public and private. Her examination of heroism in her work does not, as Spiropoulou writes, "share the trend, prevalent among male modernist writers, of nostalgically seeking to revive history's secrets or of employing it to impose order on the

representation of the past" (44). Jacob's continuous and often frivolous examination into ancient civilisation as a pattern for his own life makes explicit the violent and crumbling nature of this kind of heroism. But Jacob, as an inheritor of culture, cannot escape the traps of heroism. An implication of Girard's theory of mimesis is the idea of inheritance, which circumscribes this condition of desire within culture; if all desire is mimetic then inheritance operates along these same methods. It is one of the few mechanisms of mimesis that acts visibly and with conscious effort, as Fleming writes in *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis*: "given certain conditions, this mediation (of desire) happens quite consciously, as is the case with cultural practises such as forms of discipleship, pupilage, and apprenticeship; in other instances, mimetic desire operates more or less undetected" (5). The imitation and adoption of previous culture mores and modes of relations is an unproblematised given, a condition of being born into systems that predate us. As Carol Ohmann writes in her 1977 paper 'Culture and Anarchy in *Jacob's Room*, it is "a novel of manners and, like *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, concerned with social conventions and how, accepting them, people live unawakened and circumscribed" (162). Even as early as Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, the mirror is already present as a mediator for the perpetuation of rigid and inhuman structures. Rachel Vinrace and Terence, after another fraught attempt at understanding one another, turn to the looking-glass and "with a brush tried to make themselves look as if they had been feeling nothing all the morning". But instead of covering over their feelings, they see only that they are "really very small and separate", with "a large space for the reflection of other things" (*The Voyage Out*, 353). Not only are the pair of them an almost insignificant part of the wider picture presented to them, but there is the implication that even their bodies exist as a "reflection of other things". While *The Voyage Out's* "Austenian" narrator would have us distinguish between feeling and reality (Dowling, 116) Woolf's modernist fiction uses these patterns of feeling and this interrogation of the mirror to greater aesthetic effect.

This pattern flows outwards from the mirror to the various mirrors society erects; in *Jacob's Room*, these are explicitly those of remembrance and inheritance. The production and repetition of cultural values, instincts, and forms is the chief concern of mimetic theory; the creation of desire and its disastrous consequences is its chief framework. Woolf uses this framework to interrogate the process by which Jacob's death is brutally foretold.

Jacob is intimately connected to the mythic England he personifies and the mythic hero he is made to embody by almost all who encounter him. The clock which intones throughout the novel conveys to Jacob "old buildings" and "time", a quality of "himself the inheritor" of both civilisation and the present moment (40). The past, the present moment, and futurity all

belong to him; he is the focal point of investment upon which time may flow; he is the point at which modernity begins. His trajectory involves his assumption of British imperial culture; as this is a structure invested with violence and hierarchy, this assumption is fraught. While Judy Little describes Jacob as a “brutally deceived heir” (112), this deception only exists insofar as the heir to an inherently sacrificial culture is the recipient of a tide of violence that may—or, in Jacob's case, shall—engulf him as well. But as any reader would know, that inheritance is a dubious gift when Jacob is destined for war. As A.J.P. Taylor writes in *English History 1914-1945*, “The roll of honour in every school and college bore witness to the talents which had perished-the men of promise born during the eighteen-nineties whose promise was not fulfilled” (120). With the tolling of the bells we understand there to be a "ticking time bomb" (Zwerdling, 65) which destines Jacob to his death; but the bells are the voice of the past, a site of both religious and political authority. “The stroke of the clock even was muffled as if intoned by somebody reverent from a pulpit; as if generations of learned men heard the last hour go rolling through their ranks and issued it, already smooth and time-worn, with their blessing, for the use of the living” (40). That initial unfulfilled promise of Jacob's generation is a promise of inheritance unfulfilled insofar as the Empire required its sacrifice—that it required these deaths to sustain itself.

After all, Jacob is “invested from the start with mythical dimension”, as Carol Ohmann describes (162). There is a constant invocation of timelessness and symbolism with reference to Jacob—and the double-edged quality of myth which separates Jacob from the material and physical connection to others. In Cambridge, the don and his wife await Jacob at the luncheon where they will serve a roast lamb, while the narrator ominously intones that “there is no need to think of [young men] grown old” (38). In Olympia, Jacob’s head is “exactly on a level with the head of the Hermes of Praxiteles. The comparison was all in his favour” (145).

Most brilliantly, on Guy Fawkes night, Jacob is “the most beautiful man we have ever seen”, distinguishing him from the other dancers, and someone has “wreathed his head with paper flowers. Then somebody brought out a white and gilt chair and made him sit on it. As they passed, people hung glass grapes on his shoulders, until he looked like the figurehead of a wrecked ship” (73). In Kathy Philips’s reading of the Guy Fawkes' celebrations—a bonfire festival to remember the failed assassination of parliament by English Catholics in 1605—the crowds are being “trained in revenge”, and so too the dancers set Jacob up to become a new effigy “burned in the war” (Philips, 152). Jacob, too, is being trained in revenge, as the inheritor of a culture that would send him to his death. He is being set apart both as a

privileged member of the community but also as one destined for death; like the *pharmakon* of the ancient purgative sacrifice rituals, his future is invested both with the great responsibility of the continuation of empire as well as the sacrifice which that empire necessitates for its own continuation. While sacrificial victims are, in Girard's theory, often "exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants", the margins include the uppermost echelons of society, and even the highest and most privileged individual is still rendered a sacrificial victim. While "the king" is "the very heart of the community", it is "precisely his position at the centre that serves to isolate him from his fellow men, to render him casteless. He escapes from society, so to speak, via the roof" (*The Girard Reader,* 81).

This doubled quality is present throughout the novel; while Jacob dresses as "a Roman emperor" at Fanny's behest, only one page earlier it is intoned that "perhaps the Purple Emperor is feasting […] upon a mass of putrid carrion" (122-3). As Christina Alt observes in 'Virginia Woolf and the Natural Sciences', Woolf writes against "the danger of habituating individuals to violence in any form" (252); while Jacob failed to catch the White Admiral before it fluttered up the oak, the Purple Emperor feasts beneath. Similarly, the opal-shelled crab, caught by Jacob—as he was feeling "rather heroic" as he scaled the "primitive" rock on the beach (3)—turns at the bottom of the pail, ceaselessly and futilely trying to escape (8). Even the childhood act of collecting takes on the colour of imperialism in a culture that celebrates the rigid categorisation of humans. As "Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself; stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery". But within this there is never a "harsher necessity! or one which entails greater pain, more certain disaster; for wherever I seat myself, I die in exile" (66-7). This hierarchy is acknowledged as explicitly isolating, but its continuation is as much a disaster as the violence required to maintain these borders. The impossibility of human connection is created through the maintenance of these borders, paradoxically necessitating the systemic violence required in their maintenance even as they supposedly function to eliminate or prevent in their function the permeation of violence. As Little writes, "The butterfly box with its neatly labeled specimens is not unlike the rows of crosses in Flanders fields inscribed with the names of the fallen—meticulously arranged corpses that constitute the record of conquests and captures" (85).

Alongside this invocation of ritual, hierarchy, tradition, categorisation, and empire, Jacob is specifically "called to revivify his culture" (Ohmann, 165). Though Ohmann's reading runs parallel to my own, she does not, however, look at sacrifice or the mimetic

process as the underlying mechanism binding together these two thematic strands. As indeed, "we are the only people in the world who know what the Greeks meant" (*Jacob's Room*, 74). This method of childhood categorisation continues through to Jacob's adulthood as he tours the Mediterranean, as "Civilizations stood round them like flowers ready for picking. Ages lapped at their feet like waves fit for sailing" (74). He visits Greece, Rome, Constantinople—their relationship with Antiquity is the relationship with Empire: to colonise the past for the perpetuation of the present. In Angeliki Spiropoulou's reading, she draws from Woolf's essay 'On Not Knowing Greek', to explore and expand the ways in which the past is conceptualised in *Jacob's Room.* In Woolf's essay there is the firm understanding that there can be no knowledge beyond the interpretive; there is an insurmountable gulf that is bridged only by efforts to reconstruct the past in ways that are, consciously and unconsciously, inflected by the ideologies of the times. The text "challenges the prevalent notion of Greek as ontological essence that sustains its mythical dimension […] What meaning Greek is claimed to have is therefore not immanent and steady, but rather defined by the desire of a lacking subject, necessarily positioned 'outside', as external to its object, a mere product of the hermeneutic act" (65). In *Jacob's Room* more specifically, "Greek becomes the paradigm of the original, self-founding type of culture, against which the moderns are always found lacking" (68).

Jacob travels through the history of Western civilisation but instead of finding the root of the culture to which he is heir, he finds merely "myth" and "illusion"—blaming the governesses and "the way we're brought up". He feels, instead, like "a man about to be executed" (137). Returning to the hotel, Jacob dwells excessively on this terrible discovery that his understanding is based on myth and illusion. "Perhaps […] we do not believe enough," he offers. This "surrender" is a "modern invention". "Our fathers at any rate had something to demolish", he thinks, "and so have we" (138). While Jacob might inwardly feel shaken by the cracks in his illusions, his place within the sacrificial paradigm remains constant. Angeliki Spiropoulou's reading of Woolf in constellation with Walter Benjamin concludes that Jacob fails to "take up a truly 'heroic' position" (65), which subverts the paradigm of masculinity and heroism itself. While I agree that *Jacob's Room* displays the present's inability "to form a creative relationship with the past" (68), I contend that the novel's relationship to the heroic is more complex. It's not that the heroic is not achieved, but that the heroic is based upon a sacrificial demand to which Jacob is destined to fall. A demand which, at its core, is constructed through illusion, artifice, and mimesis.

The dispassion of violent imperialism is displayed in a segment outside of Jacob's experience. While "character-drawing" is "frivolous", nothing but "vacancy, flourishes, and

mere scrawls", the patterns and movements of military operations are portrayed as these same scrawling, vacant flourishes.

> The battleships ray out over the North Sea, keeping their stations accurately apart. At a given signal all the guns are trained on a target which (the master gunner counts the seconds, watch in hand—at the sixth he looks up) games into splinters. With equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together. Like blocks of tin soldiers the army […] stops, reels slightly this way and that, and falls flat, save that, through field glasses, it can be seen that one or two pieces still agitate up and down like fragments of broken match-stick. (155)

This waste of life is comical in its detachment; the men "suffocate uncomplainingly" and "tin soldiers" blunder about in a cornfield, reported from behind a pair of field glasses. The anonymous, toy-like groups of men is Jacob's ultimate fate, as "it is thus that we live […] driven by an unseizable force" and Jacob, only a few short paragraphs later, is, as he walks down Hermes Street at a rapid pace, too "driven by this unseizable force" (156).

A novelist might try to catch and pin down that feeling like one of Jacob's butterflies, but the soldiers' attempts to catch bullets in butterfly nets is futile. Like the fist raised to hit the young Virginia in her *Sketch of The Past*, the empire drives down with an unseizable force that demands response, both to keep the powerlessness of the social order and to direct traffic at Ludgate Circus. Is this heroic? *Jacob's Room* contends that it is, and this heroism engenders a society based in violence. And Jacob is in no position to change things, for as Bonamy remarks, "He left everything just as it was" (178).

Women as Mourners

As we have seen, Jacob inhabits the rigid trajectories available to him as the sacrificial elements of empire are brought to bear upon him. His place as the inheritor of civilisation makes him eminently sacrificeable. Throughout the text, Jacob is remembered through disparate and disconnected scenes recounted by different women, a life which "lacks teleology" (Zwerdling, 88) due to its inevitable senseless death. The women of *Jacob's Room* inevitably outlive their male counterparts; this existence of being left behind is one that is quintessentially informed by a desire to remember, reflect, and repeat. Their memories and recollections are brought together to form an incomplete picture of Jacob; nevertheless, it is their assemblage that will exist after his death, as arbitrary as his discarded shoes or an unread letter from his mother. The anxiety of inheritance and our relationship with the past dominates Woolf's fiction and nonfiction. Women's inheritance of post-war culture is framed as one of filial or sororal obligation, that is, one of bloodlines and kinship; the female

characters, in accordance with their late Victorian status as receptacles of emotive symbolism and mourning ritual, are left with the remains of the culture from which they have been systematically excluded. Comparing this with Carter's later meditations on similar structures of exclusion and violence, we can see that while the women of *Shadow Dance* inhabit a more visible, sustained role than the women of *Jacob's Room*—and are invariably seen through the eyes of Morris rather than the reverse—they inhabit the same cultural role within the mimetic paradigms presented by both authors.

> "It is those damned women," said Jacob, without any trace of bitterness, but rather with sadness and disappointment that what might have been should never be.
> (This violent disillusionment is generally to be expected in young men in the prime of life, sound of wind and limb, who will soon become fathers of families and directors of banks.)" (151)

Just as Jacob sits confused in his hotel in Greece, puzzled by what he perceives to be the illusion of a cohesive historical and symbolic British Empire, in the restaurant of his hotel in Greece, however, the focus shifts to "the chambermaid, emptying his basin upstairs". While Jacob muses about "something solid, immovable, and grotesque" behind both the middle-class evening parties and the slums of London, the chambermaid cleans up after him, "aware" of Jacob. Like Clara Durrant urging her dog to wait to cross the street to defecate as Bowley imagines her as "some pale virgin", the unnamed chambermaid cleaning up after Jacob is one of many women dirtying their hands so that men might have room for their illusions. For we would be "much worse off […] without our astonishing gift for illusion" (137).

Now this broken mirror, these twin perspectives that cloud the image of empire, becomes most apparent when we compare Jacob's concerns to those of the women in his life. The women of *Jacob's Room* each inhabit circumscribed positions in which they rely on male characters for a sense of self. Mrs. Barfoot, the Captain's wife, under the charge of Mr. Dickens. While "at home where he was made little of" Mr. Dickens still finds "the feelings of a man" in helping Captain Barfoot, "his master", by being "in charge" of Mrs. Barfoot "on the front", putting the hierarchical position in military terms (20). And Mrs. Barfoot obliges the feeling, speaking to him as if "he knew a great deal more about the time and everything than she did", though she knows her husband is committing a type of infidelity against her while she is invalided. She is "civilization's prisoner" (19) as she watches the shadows fall like the bars of a cage. Or there is George Plumer's wife, "ambitious" but equipped with nothing but "an instinctively accurate notion of the rungs of the ladder and an ant-like assiduity in pushing George Plumer ahead of her to the top", with the reward only being the

presence of the rungs below (30). And while Mrs. Flanders, who "quietly goes about making the system of gender relations work for her" (Philips, 147) as a widow—figuratively gelding Mr. Floyd's proposal of marriage while literally gelding his cat—Mrs. Jarvis's incisive eye is what strips back these acquiescences and complicities of the other women characters. Mrs. Jarvis, though unable to leave her husband and "ruin a good man's career"—as a rector's wife—as she "sometimes threatened", still recognises the methods by which men debase women and run empires, viewing Mrs. Flanders's widowed state as the same as being left in the wilderness outside a great fortress. "Yet I have a soul", she intones, "and it's the man's stupidity that's the cause of this, and the storm's my storm as well as his" (22).

Early in the novel, Betty Flanders and Mrs. Jarvis go to sit by a graveyard that overlooks the moor and the village: "I never pity the dead […] They are at rest […] And we spend our days doing foolish unnecessary things without knowing why" (130). Now here they sit in this graveyard, which contains not only the faint voices of the tombstones but also Roman swords, linked together only by their knitting. Here we have women trying to make meaning and make a continuous history from disparate fragments.

But "Mrs. Jarvis was not liked in the village" (130). If this village in Cornwall is a microcosm of Victorian and Edwardian England as my reading presupposes, then Mrs. Jarvis is seen as a more subversive woman for her outspokenness than Mrs. Flanders is for her unwillingness to marry despite her reliance on Captain Barfoot. These "foolish unnecessary things" which are performed without understanding maintain these mechanisms; but this is a community in which sacrifice is built into its very foundations, as "In one of these, to hold, an historian conjectures, the victim's blood, a basin has been hollowed, but in our time it serves more tamely to seat those tourists who wish for an uninterrupted view of the Gunard's Head" (49). And from here the tourists of Cornwall use this spot to watch Mrs. Pascoe, another resident of the village, at her washing. And in the gravesite upon the hill visited by Mrs. Jarvis and Mrs. Flanders, before them is the breadth of their life and their community; beneath them are the bones and ephemera of all who lived before:

> Did the bones stir, or the rusty swords? Was Mrs. Flanders's twopenny-halfpenny brooch for ever part of the rich accumulation? and if all the ghosts flocked thick and rubbed shoulders with Mrs. Flanders in the circle, would she not have seemed perfectly in her place, a live English matron, growing stout? (130)

While there is a sense of discontinuity—Mrs. Flanders's knitting needles and cheap jewellery, all she can afford as a widowed mother, are out of place beside the "swords" of the graveyard—there is also a continuity; the ephemera of the bygone age will be joined by the ephemera of the present, to rest unearthed as detritus of another culture that has passed; the

militarism of the swords and the bones is covered over by the jewellery. While women might seem like unnecessary ephemera beside the swords, they too are as deeply embedded in the militaristic culture—literally supported by the gravestones—and as “a live English matron” Mrs. Flanders is able to read the tombstones and remember them. “Yet even in this light the legends of the tombstones could be read”, where they have “brief voices” (130-2) that come to the textual present. These legends, like “merchant of this city”, inform the present; the women, as the living mourners, may remember and repeat them. For, to Fanny, the "idea of Jacob was more statuesque, noble, and eyeless than ever" (171). He is placed symbolically among the other statues of London, erected by women as the nude statue of Achilles in Hyde Park. As in both Trafalgar Square and Whitehall, great men stare "with fixed marble eyes and an air of immortal quiescence" over the bald heads of the men trying to "impose some coherency" on present events (172-3). But, as Clara sees with alarm, the horse in Hyde Park—the living, breathing, symbol of vigour and militarism rapidly careening down the path—is riderless. As Neverow suggests: “Furthermore, the statue of Achilles referenced near the close of the novel is in Hyde Park Corner and celebrates victory in war; it is remarkable mainly for its size and its embarrassing history and criticism during its unveiling” (Neverow, 32).

The loop of the railing beneath the statue of Achilles was full of parasols and waistcoats; chains and bangles; of ladies and gentlemen, lounging elegantly, lightly observant.

> "'This statue was erected by the women of England …'" Clara read out with a foolish little laugh. "Oh, Mr. Bowley! Oh!" Gallop-gallop-gallop-a horse galloped past without a rider. The stirrups swung; the pebbles spurted.
> "Oh, stop! Stop it, Mr. Bowley!" she cried, white, trembling, gripping his arm, utterly unconscious, the tears coming. (167-8)

As Carol Ohmann states in her reading: “We are in the presence of an anachronism or even of absurdity, in the presence of an old model of heroism, born of the myth of Greece and nourished by the history of the British Empire” (170). Most notably it is women who have erected this enormous statue of heroism, one that commemorates as much at it inspires. Despite this, women are at a distance from the acts itself; they are simply there as caretakers of the signifier, just as earlier in the novel an old, unnamed woman stops to admire another grand statue commemorating British militarism:

> A magnificent place for an old woman to rest in, by the very side of the great Duke’s bones, whose victories mean nothing to her, whose name she knows not, though she never fails to greet the little angels opposite, as she passes out, wishing the like on her own tomb, for the leathern curtain of the heart has flapped wide. (63)

In *Jacob's Room*, the distance from death is plain; where Betty Flanders thinks she can hear the guns across the channel she recognises she can't, "Not at this distance"—it is only women beating dust from carpets. The deaths and the bodies are too distant to make meaning from them. She, like the other women left behind during the war, are too distanced from the deaths of their sons to make any difference in the trajectory of those deaths (154).

However, the complicity of the women is acknowledged, despite their small and often inexpressible acts of defiance against the structures that have simultaneously trapped and excluded them. Rose Shaw sees life as "wicked" because "a man called Jimmy refused to marry a woman called (if memory serves) Helen Aitken", as "both were inanimate" and "Rose was re-born every evening precisely as the clock struck eight. All four were civilization's triumph" (94-5). But this triumph of civilisation is shown to be one which is violently upheld, for the "lamps of London uphold the dark as upon points of burning bayonets" (95). Rose's triumph and her rebirth at every evening party, her role as social facilitator and matchmaker is confirmed as she pairs "inanimate" men and women together. But the war disrupts this process, as "now Jimmy feeds crows in Flanders and Helen visits hospitals" (JR, 95). The women of the text, while some gaze up at the statues with a sense of inclusion and contentedness, are often vying for entry into the social order: "Plato continues his dialogue; […] in spite of the woman in the mews behind Great Ormond Street who has come home drunk and cries all night long, 'Let me in! Let me in!" (108). This is an echo of the earlier futility of the "opal-shelled crab" as it tries to escape the prison of the child's bucket, "trying with its weakly legs to climb the steep side; trying again and falling back, and trying again and again" (8).

Ultimately *Jacob's Roo*m is about the distance that is created between men and women; their spheres, their education, their importance, their memory, their deaths. And despite women's role in the texts as caretakers, mirrors, and mourners, very little understanding of Jacob is reached. He remains at an unanswerable, infinite remove. Jacob's room itself remains closed to women, and only able to be accessed after his death. The gap is, as yet, unbridgeable—the distance is too great. The war, and Jacob, are now beyond them in comprehension, but not beyond them in loss. As Fanny gazes on Jacob, she thinks how: "Possibly [young men] look into the eyes of faraway heroes, and take their station among us half contemptuously, she thought" (116). For while they remain distant, women still have the power to "stuff their victims' characters till they are swollen and tender as the livers of geese" (154). This delicacy, ripe for plucking and consuming, may only be prepared by women. An examination of Woolf's essays and diaries during the war period through to the writing of

Jacob's Room shows her awareness of women's roles within the war machine; "I become steadily more feminist, owing to the Times, which I read at breakfast and wonder how this preposterous masculine fiction [the War] keeps going a day longer — without some vigorous young woman pulling us together and marching through it — Do you see any sense in it? I feel as if I were reading about some curious tribe in Central Africa" (Woolf, *Letters*… vol. 2 *Letter to Margaret Llewellyn Davies*, 76).

But the systemic violence of empire is one driven by an enthusiastic apparatus of people from Jacob to Clara, and even to Mrs Flanders. This violence and heroism, Woolf argues across her work, is a result of mimesis, and it does not have the means to resist itself, or break this pattern, so long as the mirror remains present. Now, how that mirror might be broken, and how those fragments might be reconstituted into a feminine subjectivity, is a question Woolf looks at more fully in her later work. Woolf finds part of the answer in women's mourning practices, reconfigured in the modernist period—where our relationship to our past and to our dead may be rearticulated from the pieces, where mourning is a continuous process rather than one that turns the dead into static statues. What is Mrs. Flanders meant to do with a pair of Jacob's old shoes? What statue can commemorate those? For now, *Jacob's Room* only offers a question, a puzzle-piece of the feminist response to violence that Woolf would later more fully articulate.

Woolf's project, as many critics have pointed out, has always been to "criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense" (*A Writer's Diary*, 248). But within Woolf's early work there is a yet-inarticulable resistance; she maintains a desire for wholeness that is just as keenly expressed as the infectious quality of violence which must be resisted. But in her earliest work she can only strip back the covering upon that mechanism rather than offer a means of ending it. The fist is raised, it descends, but Woolf's powerlessness is spoken rather than left to silence. As she wrote privately as she began her work on *Jacob's Room*, "There's no doubt in my mind that I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice" (*A Writer's Diary*, 46).

Shadow Dance **(1966)**

While *Jacob's Room* deals explicitly with the difficulties of inheritance of a sacrificial culture, *Shadow Dance* explores another aspect of mimesis through the characters Morris and Honeybuzzard. Girard's description of "internal mediation" of mimetic desire involves a principle of effacement; mimetic rivals—two individuals vying for the same desired object,

the source of the desire a product of mimesis itself—will inevitably render those individuals as doubles of one another as they continuously escalate their violence in an effort to differentiate themselves in pursuit of the desired object. This "crisis of distinctions" (*Violence and The Sacred*, 49) undermines the social boundaries that are necessary for a culture based on hierarchy and exclusion to exist. "Any violent effacement of differences […] reaches out to destroy a whole society" (70). In the paradigm of the sacrificial crisis, Girard explains the necessity of a curative violence to quell the effluence of destructive, effacing violence. This is performed on a scapegoat who is unable to inspire retribution and, through the death or exile of the scapegoat, imposes a unity on the otherwise disassembling community. Therefore a gendered reading of effacement would take into account the myriad ways in which women are instilled with men's desire as a mitigating force, rather than as one that inspires rivalry. While, as Warner explains, as "objects of desire" (224) women are not passively consumed by this desire in Carter's novels but instead find ways to subvert or undermine the violence which their position within the paradigm supposedly inspires. The mimetic process interrogated and unresolved in *Jacob's Room* is presented, interrogated, and equally unresolved in *Shadow Dance*. While the mimetic inheritance of *Jacob's Room* details the process by which Jacob's death is a tragic necessity of the structures that place him at their apex, the world that Morris and Honeybuzzard inherit is a disjointed, fragmented, and discarded past. *Shadow Dance* picks up the old shoes which Jacob has left behind in death and sells them on in their pawn shop.

Where *Jacob's Room* explores the difficulties of a mimetics based on inheritance and cultural stasis, *Shadow Dance* opens on a culture in a state of upheaval. Set in 1960's Bristol, Carter sought to portray and interrogate the youth counterculture of which she was a part, the "dark underside of the lives lead by [Bristol's] bohemian youth" (Brennan, 162). As sixties Left liberalism attempted to free sexuality from social mores, this domination was reinscribed within what was believed to be the demolition site of the counterculture. The institutions enforcing this hegemony were critiqued, dismantled, or merely ignored, but the social relations which followed from these structures remained. Carter's critique of this kind of feminist analysis—in which women must be made subjects of their own bodies—demonstrates that as long as desire operates under a mimetic process, the same patterns of interpersonal relations will inevitably be followed. Patricia Smith describes the foundations of 1960's culture as "simply elements of a greater phenomenon, the youth culture's valorisation of total freedom (or, more precisely, license)" (P. Smith, 24). Liberation as an expression of license for men's sexuality rather than women's sense of self is echoed by

Jenny Diski; as she recalls in her recollections of the 1960s, mutual relationships broke down in favour of radical individualism and personal desire. Women's roles were "mostly of ornamental, sexual, domestic or secretarial value to the men striking out for radical shores" (Diski, 89-90). Diski goes on to quote David Widgery's description in his historical analysis, *Preserving Disorder*: "We changed attitudes but not structure" (Diski, 96). Against the cultural grain of accepting desire as an expression of the self, Carter's work demonstrates how desire is a highly mimetic, social condition which is transmitted, reflected, and permitted through social relations rather than the result of an individual, autonomous self being expressed.

Furthermore, Carter breaks quite early with the prevailing feminist discourse of her time: while a Marxist critique might maintain that a structured hierarchy exists between male and female in which the female is subject to domination and lack of agency, Carter depicts women taking part and supporting the systems that maintain this hierarchy; likewise, a liberal feminist critique would expect women to engage with the hierarchical structure in order to access the subjugating power for their own material gain—Carter too subverts this by depicting the mimetic role of women as one imposed through structural violence.

In her reading of *Love*, Smith analyses Carter's interrogation of "the sinister motivations lurking behind the external display of emotionality" (P. Smith, 24). Carter's earliest novels are from the perspective of these self-styled libertines exploring the full expression of their newfound sexual and emotive license, but to the profound disadvantage of the women in their lives. In 'The Surrealist Uncanny in *Shadow Dance*', Anna Watz explains how Carter adopts a masculine narrative perspective and a masculine surrealist iconography in order to "mimic" and "lay bare" these "misogynist patterns buried deep in the (male and female) psyche, and in that way challenge traditional and prescriptive notions of femininity as either passive and virtuous or threatening and castrating" (117). Carter's trajectory is a movement from 'mimesis' to 'mimicry'—from prescriptivism to pastiche—and then finally, to an alternative mode of being. Or, in Sage's words, Carter's writing is: "Grotesque, and yet […] recognisable [...] she seems bent on a general stocktaking, from the earliest innocent cons to their latest camp revivals" (Sage 1977, 53). Zoe Brennan levels a charge of "replicating […] sexism and misogyny" alongside the cultural critique in Carter's earlier texts (Brennan, 166-7). But it is Carter's precise drawing of the sexual relations and hierarchical intimations of 1960's counterculture that allows the critique to flourish. The range of her allusions and assemblages is a concentrated critique of a culture assembling a new identity, for "Feeling that the conventional value system of the Western world has lost its foundation,

the sixties Bohemians remain in a dangling existence, spiritual nomads strategically escaping from any ideological centre: their sense of being is the sense of an ending" (Yoshioka, 68). As Elaine Jordan explains, "Postmodernism […] implies critique plus creation from the void or the rubble of that critique […] a critique which wants to precipitate changes and envision futures" (Jordan 1992, 159-60). As modernism could only have arisen out of the cultural conditions that pertained in the context of the Great War and the political movements that gained traction in its wake, postmodernism could only have arisen from the broken rubble of a culture consistently shattered and rebuilt through cyclical violence. According to Jane Hentgès in 'Through the Looking Glass: Playing with Schizophrenia and Surrealism in *Shadow Dance*', Carter uses "Morris and psychiatric illness to introduce a 'shadow dance', a new surrealist, subversive, inverted vision of the world; a dark, shadowy wonderland, both fascinating and frightening lying behind the looking glass of reality […] in order to render 'the uncanny', entropic world of the unconscious visible, not only to destabilize accepted ideas on what constitutes reality" and also - in my reading - to make tactile and visible the reality of violence (197-8). It does so, I hope to demonstrate, through a critique of mimetic violence and the effacement that inevitably results through rivalries.

With *Shadow Dance*, Carter "reveals that both men and women are victims of a second-hand discourse that uses them harshly" (Gustar, 424). This second-hand discourse is on sale in the second-hand shop operated by Honeybuzzard and Morris, who pillage old homes for junk and foist it on unsuspecting tourists. Still, the pair are the ones most attached to the assemblage of bric-a-brac, and make nearly no sales as they continue to accumulate these pieces of history. *Shadow Dance* becomes a thorough examination of the self-imposed and self-regurgitating gendered scripts that are not truly countered until Carter's subsequent novel, *The Magic Toyshop*.

As Jennifer Gustar writes, Morris and Honeybuzzard begin as indistinct from one another so that by the end of the novel: "That [Morris] does not carry out the mutilation or the murder himself is of little consequence, as the novel is clear about the ways in which the social domain acquiesces in his favour to allow him to express his desires through the violence of others" (Gustar, 408). Throughout the text, Morris attempts to distinguish himself from Honeybuzzard's murderous desires and misuse of the people around him; but Morris enacts violence in his own way, relying on Honeybuzzard to mirror him throughout and perform the actions which he hesitates to enact himself. While Morris, as a visual artist, attempts to align his art with his reality, Honeybuzzard seeks to align his reality with his art. This drive to differentiate and instigate change turn both characters to extraordinarily visual

and highly mimetic acts of violence, real and symbolic. From the start of the text, Morris grapples with a sense of guilt concerning Ghislaine's mutilation. In retaliation for his own impotence, he has set Honeybuzzard on Ghislaine to "teach her a lesson", which results in a vicious knife leaving Ghislaine horribly scarred. But when, as Gustar acknowledges, he has a private moment to himself, Morris takes photographs of Ghislaine that he and Honeybuzzard have made together and, at first, though he considers burning them, he subsequently decides to reenact Honeybuzzard's violence on Ghislaine's photographed flesh (17). Carter demonstrates that there is little difference, in the end, between Morris and Honeybuzzard when they clamber after the same desires. Morris is unaware of his own impulses, and while he "had never thought of himself as a vindictive man" he still commits this symbolic violence against Ghislaine's helpless representation.

Honeybuzzard as Libertine

While Morris consistently holds himself in contrast to Honeybuzzard, the latter exists on a purely visual level, able to transform at will. But he must, as Chiharu Yoshioka writes, be affirmed by a spectator, as his identity is "an exhibitive representation demarcated by the gaze of others" (75). And Morris is, often, that spectator; in his narrative, he consistently transforms people into paintings, so Ghislaine is a "Francis Bacon horror painting of the flesh" (20), Henry Glass is "a Lowry stick man" (114), and Edna is portrait of "'Compassion', Millais would have called her" (50), or "St. Ursula, the virgin, smiling at the rapists; painted by Burne-Jones" (120). Even the Struldbrug the pair of them encounter in the derelict house is "like the Virgin in Florentine pictures meeting the beautiful, terrible Angel of the Annunciation" (136). These representations guide Morris's understanding of the characters to a preternatural degree, but he is ludicrously offended when Honeybuzzard's puppet-making includes a "Jumping Jack" of Morris himself—"Honey pulled the string once more and Morris's cardboard self convulsed in its St Vitus' dance" (80) while Morris, irritated, greatly desires to "punch him and hurt him" in retaliatory response. While he can easily imagine the nonexistence of others' subjectivities—particularly those of women or feminized men—the mockery of his own masculinity and agency inspires violence. Honeybuzzard undermines Morris's masculinity by comparing him to the objectified women around him, literally objectifying him with the puppet pastiche.

Honeybuzzard himself, a perpetual recreation, "liked to wear false noses, false ears and plastic vampire teeth" (16). And in the pornographic photographs with Ghislaine—in which

Morris refused to participate—Honeybuzzard's own phallus is mentioned alongside the multitude of false appendages he dons throughout the collection. And so Honeybuzzard, too, may only mimic the various pieces of detritus that he collects. As Aidan Day describes in 'Angela Carter: The Rational Glass', "changing identity is only acceptable in [Carter's] writing when it is done with due recognition of the rights of others, when it is done as part of an economy not of domination and subservience but rather of relationships of change and reciprocity" (Day, 18-9). While Honeybuzzard is liberated, he is only liberated within the confines of the patriarchal hierarchy of relationships which dehumanises others and, ultimately, dehumanises him. He is, as Aidan Day writes, crafted to "question the nature of his freedom"; "a freedom that spells captivity for others and empties all meaning out of the word truth" (18). His is a type of freedom that can only come at the expense of others.

As Honeybuzzard himself explains: "'I should like,' said Honey dreamily, 'to have a floor set out in chequers and to play chess with men and women. I would stand on a chair and call out my moves from a megaphone and they would click their heels and march forward.'" (117). But just moments later, when Morris and Honeybuzzard play a game of chess and Morris wins, Honeybuzzard upends the game rather than admit defeat (118). As *Shadow Dance* demonstrates, men like Honeybuzzard would rather the world end than have their fun taken away. Honeybuzzard might appear like a new and liberated man, but his outward femininity and seemingly transgressive manner, which Morris and Emily both find disarming, does not mitigate Honeybuzzard's inability to see others as more than playthings and "shadows". His hollowness pushes him to act on others' desires, and his lack of identity beyond the visual and the violent disintegrates into madness by the novel's close. As Morris explains to Emily, "He's always seemed so essential to me, like a limb […] you don't bother to ask it why it does things […] And he was like my hand that belonged to me but I never understood how it functioned" (169). This inability to see one another as anything but reflective surfaces or pieces of themselves is repeated in a later scene in which, after looting one of the abandoned houses slated for demolition, they discover one of the café 'Struldbrugs' living in a squat in one of the rooms, asleep. Honeybuzzard "wanted to pull her string", (136) as with his other puppets, and frightens her into unconsciousness.

Most tellingly, "Morris tried to see the eyes under the sunglasses but only saw his own face blackly reflected" (59-60). They cannot, as Girard examines in his reading of Corinthians, "see face to face"; they may only see each other as darkened reflections and extensions of themselves. These darkened shadows obscure Morris and Honeybuzzard from engaging in authentic interactions which are necessary for true communication. Their mutual

reality is a series of shared imitations which extend outward, from Morris's imagining Honeybuzzard's story of finding Ghislaine knifed by strangers rather than himself as "operatic" in his mind's eye to Honeybuzzard describing it as a "Whitehall farce", the same high and low cultural allusions that reflect, repeat, and reimagine their lives through play-acting. While they seek to differentiate themselves, Morris ends up more alike than not to Honeybuzzard's wild retellings and reimaginings. As Honeybuzzard says, "life imitates art, you know, I always thought it did", and so Honeybuzzard has "decided to believe the lie, as he had done before with other lies" (60). If there is nothing real behind appearances, then their relationship can have no quality beyond the mirror. They are unable to recognise one another; "They stood for a moment staring at one another, like lovers whose eyes lock in the first moment of ecstatic recognition and think they will never stop looking at one another" (137). Mirrored images of one another and in a constant state of possession, they come to blows; but as they struggle to dominate one another, their fighting takes on sexual and gendered meaning. Honeybuzzard's mouth is "wet and passionate at Morris's ear" as they "lay breast to breast, swallowing each other's breath". Violence and desire intermingle during this moment, as Morris realises "same little point now pricking at his throat had once ripped up the soft flesh of the girl Ghislaine […] He knew he was dreaming when he realised how silly it was that such a little bit of metal should have so much power in it" (137-9). There is a momentary revelation of the paper-thinness of Honeybuzzard's semiotics, the silliness of a knife as a phallus-substitute and its ability to be turned on Morris. It is "a little bit of metal", reducing its ritual quality to its bare component; then the bathos of a discarded fish-and-chip newspaper breaks up their fight with Honeybuzzard's laughter.

Morris, while repulsed by Honeybuzzard's cruelty, mutability, and femininity, nevertheless is drawn to him, just as he is drawn to the "horrid piece of evidence for mutability […] over all the odd, disjointed fragments of other peoples' lives […] And in such an atmosphere of hope decayed Morris was at home" (25). When Honeybuzzard first appears in the text Morris "had to check a desire to wolf-whistle in derisive admiration" (55). He has a "soft, squashy-nosed, full-lipped face", a "nectarine face, bruisable and somehow juicy". But Honeybuzzard's mouth is "inexpressibly carnivorous", a "mouth that was always half-smiling in a pretty, feline carve". Morris concludes these thoughts with how "beautiful he was, and how indefinably sinister" (56). Honeybuzzard is encountered by Morris as a sexual creature, with a "wet, long mouth" against Morris's skin, "pulsing with suppressed laughter" (56-7). But his mutability remains; when Ghislaine is mentioned, the "bright face under the bright cap was a mask of nothing", and when he speaks "the mask" speaks "authoritatively"

(59). And when Honeybuzzard commands Morris to change the subject, "Morris changed the subject" (61). This mutual imposition of wills is the thread that runs through their relationship throughout the novel. Continuously, Morris is drawn to the danger and detritus that Honeybuzzard represents, and Honeybuzzard demands Morris's painterly eye to witness him and his transformations. This endlessly unresolved dialectic creates tensions and frictions that would, under Girard's paradigm, devolve into violence; the novel, however, points to the ways in which the female characters mitigate one anothers' desires to avoid catastrophe.

While the liberatory politics of the 1960s opened the door to radical change and protest, the undercurrent of mimetic desire and the relationship between men and women was still inflected with hierarchy and violence. Fundamentally, the structures governing the relationships between men and women had not altered. Carter both follows and is critical of prominent feminist authors of the 1960s and 70s, countering and anticipating their positions; however, like radical feminist authors such as Kate Millett and Germaine Greer, Carter is predominantly concerned with sexual politics and the means by which men dominate and oppress women through physical sexuality. But rather than positioning women as uncritically reflective of the social and physical domination imposed by men in a patriarchal society, Carter shows how women are often made to mitigate and express this domination.[8] Furthermore, the concept of a female subject is questioned and interrogated, as an understanding of subjecthood is explored as a perpetually flickering, mirroring, and fragmented self for men and women alike.

Women as Mirrors

The women of *Shadow Dance* exist in a state of constant and unyielding superimposition. Just as Honeybuzzard consistently alters and rearranges the images surrounding him to suit his inner life, Morris reads the outside world through a framing system of semiotics that constricts the interactions he has with others. As Anna Watz Fruchart explains, "Reducing woman to an object, unable to make words, is Morris's strategy to master his feelings of guilt, contempt and fear. Woman is dangerous and must be dominated, and even in her guise as passive object she must be annihilated" (Watz Fruchart, 35). Watz Fruchart reads Honeybuzzard and Morris's bric-a-brac, deliriously cobbled-together approach to life—both real and imaginary—as based on an inherent misogyny. Inevitably it is the women in the text who bear the brunt of both this real and symbolic

[8] A more substantial critique of Millet's text can be found in Cora Kaplan's "Radical Feminism and literature: Rethinking Millett's *Sexual Politics*" in *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism*. London: Verso, 1986.

refiguring. And while Morris finds his opposite and his mimetic rival through Honeybuzzard, both men mimicking and rejecting each other's desires in a constant confrontation that eventually consumes them both in death and madness, this endless dialectic is primarily played out across the flesh of both the naïve and pliant Ghislaine and the self-assured, stoic Emily. But far from inspiring and encouraging the rivalry between Honeybuzzard and Morris, the women facilitate a tenuous relationship that keeps both Morris and Honeybuzzard alive and differentiated. This role, both inside and outside the paradigm articulated by Girard, becomes necessary for the continuation of culture both before and after a sacrificial crisis.

Ghislaine, the "exploded beauty" mutilated by Honeybuzzard at Morris's behest, is remembered by Morris as delicate, pliant, and childlike—with a mouth "expecting somebody, anybody, everybody she met to pop a sweetie into it", and "her bones so birdy fine" and looking like "a young girl in a picture book"—but the descriptions of her which immediately follow the details of her mutilation paint a different portrait of Ghislaine, countering Morris's assumptions. She displays financial independence by refusing to allow men to buy her drinks at the pub she frequents, and "she would use [her half-pint] to mark her place at a table." She displays more agency than Morris gives her credit for; she asks pointed questions and displays a startling frankness about the people around her, and of sex, or "she would describe her menstrual pains; and he remembered the graphic recital of a course of treatment for vaginal discharge" (9-10). Most spectacularly, she was "a fire that burned those around her but was not itself consumed" (3). But ultimately Morris's dislike of her is arbitrary—"Rotten, phony Ghislaine" (4) he thinks to himself as he remembers her affectations. But her resemblance to Honeybuzzard, these "two golden children" as he later calls them, demonstrates Morris's double standard vis-a-vis the created self. Though Honeybuzzard is constantly and beautifully reinventing his outer personae, Morris does not extend this castigation of phoniness to him. Ghislaine alone bears the brunt of Morris's feelings, even while he acknowledges his desires for Honeybuzzard. Hentgès describes Ghislaine's disfigurement as "a mirror-image" of Honeybuzzard's own dualistic, "half-angelic and half-monstrous" nature (198). But more than that; Honeybuzzard is "slick as a stick of liquorice", a nectarine face, juicy and bruisable, (55) while Ghislaine's face is "sweet, white, innocent and childish, like ice-cream" (16). Morris's cannibal desires are played out in these descriptions, as he dreams of devouring women like ice-cream and dreams of both hurting and making love to Honeybuzzard, and his inability to do so, as with his inability to make love to Ghislaine, frustrates him into his murderous desires.

While Ghislaine may easily be read as the object of desire which inspires Honeybuzzard and Morris to escalating acts of violence, this easy reading elides her function within the text and between the two competing brother-figures; far from inspiring rivalry between Honeybuzzard and Morris, her presence is necessary to the continued peace between them. At once subject to the shifting social meanings inscribed—literally and figuratively—on her body, she also displays an awareness and agency which Morris either does not recognise or finds repugnant. Emily, meanwhile, inhabits a distinct role from Ghislaine's reflective surfaces. She is presented as Honeybuzzard's possession, and must navigate a patriarchal landscape that renders her inscrutable to Morris and inanimate to Honeybuzzard. She is, despite herself, as subject to the desires of the two men as Ghislaine. Ultimately the two women are forced to enact the desires of the men around them. While Ghislaine is mutilated by Honeybuzzard at Morris's threat, she is the depository of Morris's feelings towards Honeybuzzard himself. And while Emily sleeps with Morris at Honeybuzzard's insistence, she is, likewise, the tool through which Honeybuzzard enacts his desires for Morris. In accordance, "all victims, even the animals, bear a certain *resemblance* to the object they replace; otherwise the violent impulse would remain unsatisfied" (*The Girard Reader*, 81). As such, Ghislaine mimicks the role which Honeybuzzard envisions for her. As Aidan Day writes, "Ghislaine, envisaged in this scene of Honeybuzzard's fantasy as the female victim sacrificed on the altar of patriarchy, is characterised by Carter as cooperating in her own victimisation" (Day, 16). In a text riddled with uncontextualised contextless quotations from past authors, visual jokes mocking established poets, and a constant blurring between the fantastic and the true, the female subject must take a position somewhere between what these two men think of her. She is both, when encountering Henry Glass, a monster whose mutilation is her sole feature, and a pliant and masterless girl giving herself up to be dominated by Honeybuzzard.

These multiple, paradoxical desires are most acute when Morris enacts his surrogate violence on the images of Ghislaine he had made together with Honeybuzzard. Morris cannot "associate these pictures of her with his own burning recollection of her flesh", and instead of burning the pictures, he takes his pen and:

> [H]e found he was finely, carefully striping each image of her with a long scar from eyebrow to navel. All the time, he wondered why he was doing it; it seemed a vindictive thing to do and he had never thought of himself as a vindictive man. But he did not stop until he had finished marking them all in. When he looked at them spread all round his feet to dry, he was filled with revulsion at himself. (17).

This symbolic act—mingling pen and knife—is "Life imitating rotten art again, as Honey always said it did" (6). Honeybuzzard is allowed, by Morris's command, to callously

carve up Ghislaine with the same single-minded impunity with which Morris uses his pen. That Morris doesn't wield the knife is inconsequential when Ghislaine willingly goes to be carved up by Honeybuzzard.

But Ghislaine is not a surrogate victim as in Girard's paradigm—she is not used to reassert boundaries in an act of collective violence. By the end of the text, while Ghislaine's death is highly ritualised and placed within the context of Christ's crucifixion—laid out beneath a tablecloth and surrounded by candles, the daughter of a religious man—her death does not rarify the mimetic process and its tendency to scapegoat so much as reinscribe it. Morris recognises that Honeybuzzard has done "what Morris had always wanted but never defined … for choking out of Ghislaine her little-girl giggle […] filling up her voracity once and for all by cramming with death the hungry mouth between her thighs" (177-8). Morris realises that Honeybuzzard's desires are mimetic, but he embraces his sameness with Honeybuzzard in a violent sundering of the self:

> And was that why now the girl lay dead, the girl Morris had feared so much when she was alive, the girl he gave to Honey saying 'teach her a lesson'? Was she dead because he had rejected Honey? Did such things happen? Why was he bound to Honey — 'Am I my brother's keeper?' But Cain said that, treacherous Cain. (180)

Rather, Ghislaine's acceptance of her own sacrifice is an example of what Girard refers to as the "effacement of traces", (*Violence and The Sacred*, 25) as Palaver defines, "the "voluntary" intention of the victim thus distracts the observer from associating any blame with the mob" (Palaver, 192). This "mimetic collaboration with the collective" is a prime means by which the guilt of violence is transferred, yet again, onto the sacrificial victim. Just as Ghislaine understands that Honeybuzzard will cut up anything about her that he doesn't like, Morris equally cuts up the representations of her and fills her with dangerous imagery.

Emily, conversely, is first described to us as an object that "belonged to Honeybuzzard", who "eclipsed her literally and figuratively" (55), who performs Honeybuzzard's commands "obediently" like "a conjuring trick" as her cat lays asleep in her arms (57-8). She is, from the start, possessed of Honeybuzzard's will. Just as Morris views Ghislaine as ice-cream to be consumed, Honeybuzzard compares Emily to fruitcake: "I gorge on her, like a baby at a party" (59). This possession comes, through Honeybuzzard's cannibalistic metonymy, to absorb her and assimilate her into his will and desires, tangible and fraught for Emily as she navigates these relationships throughout the text. She makes explicit reference to the Bluebeard fairytale, casting herself as the murderous villain's latest wife who is also destined for death at his hands (103). But her willing abduction is, like Marianne's abduction in Carter's *Heroes and Villains* (1969), a form of what Yoshioka calls

"[applying] for the part of the Gothic heroine in distress, in order to get out of the confinement" (Yoshioka, 71). And like Marianne, existing in the cobbled-together detritus of a failed age where meaning must be scavenged, this freedom comes with dubious safety.

In accordance with Jenny Diski's explanation of women's secretarial or domestic role in relation to the libertine men of the 1960s, Emily takes on these tasks with single-minded determination. Though Honeybuzzard initially presents as a bohemian of the 1960s—sexually liberated, unrepentantly dismissive of the previous generation's social mores—he still demands a level of domesticity which Emily instinctively fulfils. She immediately comes into the text as a silent and self-assured force who begins, without prompting, to thoroughly clean the dirty flat above the shop where Honeybuzzard lives. When she arrives in Morris and Honeybuzzard's shop, she immediately goes upstairs to the kitchen where she "stood at the sink with a carton of caked scouring powder in her hand, a strong girl, a self-sufficient girl who might grow up into a matriarch" (74). Emily's role is, from the outset, decidedly obedient and domestic: she makes Morris and Honeybuzzard meals, cleans their living space, and minds the shop—all, paradoxically, to escape the confines of her Catholic father's house. But Emily is still, after all, taking care of men.

Her mind is, as Carter describes, "like a large, clean, well-lit room in which there was little furniture", and it is, presently, "occupied by a large sofa or divan, which was Honeybuzzard; to make room for this new, sizeable and heavy possession, she had shifted out all her other emotional furniture—love for parents, home, the friends of home—and was content, in exchange, simply to be occupied by this present love". Honeybuzzard possesses her subconsciously, but she is still not able to view him as anything more animate than a piece of furniture. Meanwhile, her father, "the enormous wardrobe […] her first hero" is thrown away "to clear a space for Honeybuzzard" (97). But as much as people are furniture in *Shadow Dance*, the furniture is people, as "the gleaming knobs on the posts of the brass bed nightly throbbed sympathetically and reflected the writhing limbs of the girl and her lover in a miniature, yellow and distorted world", Honeybuzzard's room being "a crystallisation" of his personality. Even at the foot of his bed is "the big mirror […] so that the occupants could see themselves in it, if they so desired." Emily is, as it were, trapped within the reflections of his self. For this, she is described as a "charitable girl"—to be able to be occupied wholly by the object of her love, even if that love is not manifested as an intersubjective experience (98-9). For: "Widely, she gave her charity; yet, impersonally" (102).

Morris "thought of passionate Emily enviously" (106) and her capacity to love so fully. For while Ghislaine comes to embody Morris's murderous desires for Honeybuzzard, Emily

is used to enact the sexual desires Honeybuzzard has for Morris. When Honeybuzzard and Morris return to the shop after startling and possibly killing the squatting Struldbrug in the abandoned house, Emily is implicitly told to make love to Morris. “Go and do anything you like to him, as long as you quiet him down”, he explains, and when she ruminates on “Anything” he demands “Shut him up for me, if you love me!” (144-5). Morris, blaming his abandonment on his mother, despite the probability of her death, puts Emily into an incestuous mother-son relationship with him in order to fulfil his own desires. She cradles him like a baby and, to comfort him, they “strained and wrestled together” (148) in the name of charity and comfort. Afterwards, “she felt as lonely as it was possible for her to feel” (148-9) whereas Morris giddily thinks to himself “Well, at least I have been unfaithful to my wife after all this time!” (150), calling Emily “Honeybuzzard’s girl”—that his desire is purely mimetic is displayed prominently in the line: “He had never, he realised, wanted Emily for her own sake; and he did not want her, now” (151). He walks home “to the sound of his invisible, hypothetical fife and drums”, a war march playing as he revels in his conquest of Honeybuzzard’s belongings, a hero at last.

Here he consciously and effectively recognises his desire for Emily as mimetic, an insight gained through Emily’s self-effacing charity, which leads into the following interaction where he reacts jealously when he sees, fresh from his own infidelity, that his wife Edna has been unfaithful to him. His reaction is “a first blind impulse of outrage” to see Henry Glass’s head which “lay on the pillow where his own head should be” (156). That, specifically, there has been this non-distinction between him and Henry Glass, that Henry Glass is in Morris’s place in the bed, that he notices and reviles. But Edna does not inspire violent rivalry between Morris and Henry Glass; rather, due to Edna and Emily’s compassion—Edna “opening her legs to Henry Glass out of sheer compassion” (158)—he comes to resolve these emotions within himself. As he imagines her life with Henry Glass he feels “this rich tapestry of life would be woven from the spun thread of her compassion” (159). Edna’s compassion makes male culture possible; she tirelessly supports both Morris and, later, Henry Glass. She is, in each moment, what they need her to be. He compares these two acts in long parenthetical paragraphs, displaying Carter’s severe criticism of what she sees as a self-abnegating style of compassion: “Which was the more genuine compassion, Edna’s emotional giving of self or Emily’s stylized abstraction? Which in fact, was the best buy from the point of view of the object of either compassion?” (159). Though Edna and Emily have absorbed the brunt of Morris’s misogyny in order to maintain a peaceable relationship, it is at the expense of their humanity—and, ultimately, Morris’s.

For while Edna, the Victorian, straight-laced, ever-suffering wife of Morris, is thought to be a jealous prude by her husband, she shows this same impersonal, self-effacing charity for both Ghislaine and Henry Glass which disrupts, momentarily, Morris's mimetic desires—or at the very least, makes him aware of them enough to rethink his feelings. "She wants to look after Ghislaine, because that's what Christians call charity" (62). Morris explains to a nonchalant Honeybuzzard, who responds with a desire to "vivisect" her like a "pink-eyed, laboratory-rat" (62). "Edna thought marriage was for submission and procreation", Morris thinks to himself. "She was a Victorian girl," one whose married lives are filled with self-abnegation. "Husbands were a force of nature or an act of God; like an earth quake or the dreaded consumption, to be borne with, to be meekly acquiesced to, to be impregnated by as frequently as Nature would allow. It took the mindless persistence, the dogged imbecility of the grey tides, to love a husband" (45). But his view of her is informed by Victorian ideals as much as he believes she is created by them. ("He thought of Edna, red-eyes, dishevelled, moaning: 'If you ever go near that woman again, I shall kill her, for I love you, my love. But I love you.'" (7). But this turns around, as "by accusing her of jealous fury, he lowered himself in her eyes" (51). Despite Morris's ambivalence towards Edna, he is unable to view her as having any kind of life or emotional feeling for anyone outside of himself. When he finds her crying, Morris assumes Edna has been crying for him, "Who else could she be crying for?" (95). But it is for Ghislaine. And at this realisation, he thinks of her spitefully; "So the poor thing had had her compassion thrown back into her face, had she? Treacherously, Morris thought 'Serve her right.' Spit your compassion against the wind. That's right." But he shifts his focus back to himself, for "after all, she was *his* Edna", and in his possessiveness seeks to redirect her emotions back to align with his own (96). It's only after Emily's act of charity that is able to reconcile Edna's actions.

It is in the wake of this act of self-destructive compassion that Emily and Ghislaine's characters finally intersect. Ghislaine comes to the shop and tells Emily outright what Honeybuzzard is capable of—that he will cut her up if she does anything he doesn't like—and this time Emily turns to cleaning again. But now, her cleaning takes on another role as she strips Honeybuzzard of the artifice of his identity through her destruction of his collection of curious items. The assemblage of junk through which Honeybuzzard has cobbled together a visual identity is broken, burned, or—in the case of the pickled foetus he keeps in a jar—flushed down the toilet. Emily, in her emotional display, manages to peel away the layers that exist between representation and reality.

But when Emily pursues Honeybuzzard so that he can take responsibility for her pregnancy and provide her with economic support, Morris and Emily discover Ghislaine's corpse. Only her lifelessness spurs Morris to "pity and tenderness, for the first time unmixed with any other feeling" (177). Whereas her living, independent body inspired in him both animosity and, later, horror, it is only as an inanimate, inert body that he feels this ineffectual "tenderness". Morris refuses to allow Emily to call for help, and so has learned nothing; he leaves Emily to her endless vomiting and to care for the now-mad Honeybuzzard's child alone. As with everything, Morris denies culpability in his own misogyny and the violence necessary to maintain it—he joins Honeybuzzard, having recognized Honeybuzzard's desires as mimetic, in his madness. As with the photographs, Morris and Honeybuzzard act out their fraternal mimeticism over the body of Ghislaine—both in reality and in representation. To disrupt this process is, in Morris's view, Emily's "betrayal" (180). That Emily is the only one, of the two, who can betray him is no accident; left behind, she is, yet again, forced to clean up after Honeybuzzard's messes, and is held responsible for the interruption and disintegration of his desires.

The women of these two texts, though drawn from opposite angles and characterised through distinct methods and perspectives, witness and demand action in response to the sacrificial nature of the societies in which they live. Though the women are left behind due to men's society demanding men's inhumanity and death, there is no method of disrupting cyclical violence available to them. Both Woolf and Carter cannot, at this moment, imagine other interpersonal arrangements which allow for intersubjective communication and mutual recognition. As Vara Neverow saw in her work *Historicized Textualities: Resisting Patriarchy*, the narrator of *Jacob's Room* is a "sister/self" of the narrators of both *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* (Neverow, 65). The women are deeply a part of the text and yet exist mostly along the margins in terms of focus. Regardless, the women are omnipresent—watching, remembering, and providing a context for Jacob's life. It would not be until much later that both authors make this attempt to "replace the daughter-father relationship with the sister-brother relationship as the paradigm for female-male social relations" (Swanson, 46). Like the surrogate victim, women within mimetic rivalry operate in doubled, paradoxical roles that both mitigate and, therefore, maintain the sacrificial paradigm at the expense of their own emotional and, on occasion, physical lives. Both Woolf and Carter draw and criticise the sacrificial crisis and demonstrate how women are complicit and yet perpetual victims within its structure. Though they possess an ability to view this structure with a critical eye, they do not possess the ability to disrupt it in a meaningful way.

In the end, the women stay behind to clean up the remains of men's destructive desires long after they have died.

Woolf & Carter: Identifying Mimetic Desire

Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter both identify, explicate, and interrogate the process of mimetic desire and rivalry which causes the sacrificial crisis. Moreover, both understand and depict the multifaceted ways in which women, excluded from subjectivity within this cultural paradigm, act as mediators, mirrors, and mourners to men's rivalry. Rather than acting as simple objects which inspire the rivalry that sparks the escalating violence necessary for a sacrificial crisis, women also inhabit roles which differentiate and affirm men and their subjectivities. As Woolf and Carter both show in their earliest novels, this role is necessary for the continued existence of civilisation both before and after the sacrificial crisis makes cathartic murder necessary.

The chorus of women in *Jacob's Room* are constantly, at their own expense, creating the social spaces which make men's culture possible. Though they are excluded from public life and the interior spaces that men make for themselves, they are shown to be ceaselessly toiling to make a space like Jacob's room available for young men like him. The titular room then becomes the structure which women support through their invisible yet ubiquitous role within the sacrificial paradigm.

The women of *Shadow Dance* perform more intimate tasks, creating the psychic space necessary for Morris and Honeybuzzard to differentiate themselves. Acts that would typically create rivalry under Girard's paradigm—Edna being unfaithful to Morris, or Emily sleeping with Morris—do not create the rivalry necessary to trigger a sacrificial crisis. It is only when Honeybuzzard is allowed to enact his and Morris's impulses that his makeshift identity shatters and the hollowness of his sense of self and his liberation are revealed. Ghislane's death, rather than her unattainability as an object, is what triggers the non-differentiation that causes Morris to join Honeybuzzard. Emily, conversely, the ever-cleaning and pragmatic woman who mystifies Morris, is left vomiting on the street, one last act of regurgitated detritus before the novel ends. The failure of 1960's liberatory culture is laid bare by Carter, as "a complete shift into a dimension where all meaning is lost results not in liberation but in utter narcissism and madness" (Watz Fruchart, 37).

It would not be until Woolf and Carter's later works—*Mrs Dalloway* and *The Magic Toyshop*, respectively—that this gulf of miscommunication between men and women might

hope to be breached in their work. Still, the paradigm of the sacrificial crisis permeates their writing even from this early point in their respective work. Until relationships between men and women are completely rearticulated and women find their sense of self, there can be no change in cyclical violence and mimetic rivalry.

"Mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action", Virginia Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own* (3). Originally a lecture delivered to the students of Newnham College, Cambridge, it has since become a seminal text within Western feminist politics and a popular focal point for women's sense of place and their relationship to their artistic and professional selves and histories. While "violent and heroic action" became one of the preeminent topics of modernist literary aesthetics—or, as Sarah Cole describe in *At The Violet Hour,* "saturated, content and form, with the ample blood of their times" (6)—Woolf's engagement with this purposefully-conflated double image of violence and heroism is one which is mediated by the mirror. In *Virginia Woolf against Empire*, Kathy Philips tracks Woolf's multifarious and scathing critiques of the British Empire across her work, her understanding of the enormous weight of atrocity that empire demands in order to sustain itself, her identification of the layers of complicity from men and women at home, and her depiction of the consequences of colonisation and warmongering on the victims and abusers alike. But even earlier than this intellectual understanding of violence as a building-block of hierarchy, Woolf understood the methods by which this violence proliferates. In *Moments of Being*, originally written as *Sketch of the Past* in 1939 but not published until 1976, Woolf describes a memory she sees as inseparable from her understanding of herself as an artist; it describes a physical altercation with her brother as a young girl:

> Just as I raised my fist to hit him, I felt why hurt another person? I dropped my hand instantly, and stood there, and let him beat me. I remember the feeling. It was a feeling of hopeless sadness. It was as if I became aware of something terrible, and of my own powerlessness. (81)

Here, Woolf resists the quality of the mirror and refuses to reflect her brother's violence. This image—of passivity and powerlessness in the face of overwhelming violence—comes to dominate Woolf's earliest attempts to find her voice and literary aesthetics, inventing the language and techniques she would require in order to express herself within these feelings, and the understanding of this "something terrible" that drove her brother's violence.

While Angela Carter's words from "Notes from The Front Line"—"Truly, [the 1960's] felt like Year One" (69)—are often read and related as a positive assessment of the time, they remains fraught with the continual problem of rebuilding a society from the detritus of the old

without simply repeating the same patterns. While Year One may have come with the realisation of the fictions of femininity, "palmed off as the real thing", when the façades fall and the mirrors break and there is nothing left but a huddled group of survivors facing this "Year One", one must recover without returning to these same patterns of oppression. As Jenny Diski writes early on in her retrospective *The Sixties* (2009), "We recreated the old divisions in what only seemed to be new forms. It was just a matter of time […] before it turned out (to our unacknowledged relief, perhaps?) that the overarching structures had been built to survive our (or any) assault on them" (6). As such, this understanding of femininity as a manufactured imposition on women's lives, a reflection of men's desires more than women's interior lives, comes to Carter with an understanding of the structures which had been, perhaps unwittingly, rebuilt from the wreckage of the old. Carter writes, as the title implies, from the 'front line' of this violent change and of the violent implications that womanhood demand; and, as Carter later stated in an interview in 1988, "towards the end of the sixties it started to feel like living on a demolition site — one felt one was living on the edge of the unimaginable: there was a constant sense of fear and excitement" (Lee, 211). Her earliest novels set out to depict youth culture by sifting through the detritus of this cultural site, trying to make meanings beyond the prescriptivism of the past. As Jane Hentgès writes, "Carter uses her writing as a mirror which reproduces not appearances but the hidden side of things, a different, unexpected vision" (202) This effort to counteract the mirror can be seen even in her earliest novels.

Carter and Woolf both stand on this front line, reporting and articulating the difficult and myriad methods by which the mirror asserts itself within men and women's lives. They perform, in their own distinct ways, both a literary and ethical critique to what they witness on these battlegrounds—which were at once revolutionary to a cultural and artistic moment—while simultaneously upholding structures of oppression and sacrifice. And for both, it was specifically felt across gendered lines; they wrote as women within a culture that violently imposed social hierarchies which specifically silenced their voices.

But within her first few novels, Woolf cannot articulate a paradigm that resolves these tensions that drive an imperialistic society based on violently-enforced hierarchy. She is concerned, as a woman and as an artist, with what forces the brother's fist to descend on his sister, and what compels society to reflect back that impression of violence. As such, Woolf's project is a matter of life and death; as such, Woolf too easily falls into this same childhood passivity and complicity in these earliest texts. Similarly, Carter cannot find a method for her characters, in her earliest novel, to form relationships which are not based on hierarchical

imbalance. They are either fully enmeshed in the cultural strictures that create their victimhood, or they are powerless to change their circumstances or their relationship to the men around them.

Jennifer Gustar reads *Shadow Dance* as a "diagnosis" rather than supplying "remedies" for the issues that are presented (407); similarly, *Jacob's Room* is an elegiac response rather than one which looks into the future. Both Woolf and Carter use their literary aesthetics to critique, expose, and indict but cannot yet find the alternate modes of being—culturally,both physically and psychologically—which may offer solutions to this specifically gendered problem. But this same diagnosis is shared between them, as is this same expert rendering of the influences that the social structures of mimesis and mimetic violence have over the lives of their characters. But beyond that, both texts examine the methods by which women are both integral and marginal to the process of mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry. Though employing distinct formal techniques and writing from vastly different social and cultural points in British and women's history, Woolf and Carter come to remarkably similar conclusions with regards to women's role within mimetic theory. These early works lay the groundwork for their continued interrogation into the methods by which women's bodies, voices, and subjectivities are appropriated for the continuation of men's desires and men's cultures. This has enormously stultifying results for women's lives as well as men's, as the former are unable to articulate their specific subjectivities and desires and the latter cannot form interpersonal relationships which are not based on dominance and hierarchy. Woolf and Carter do this, I contend, by specifically highlighting the distinct ways society renders men and women victims of violence through mutually exclusive modes of cultural inheritance and effacement, which terrorises, disenfranchises, and disrupts relationships between people. These structures are, however, supported by a system of mimeticism into which subjects are inexorably drawn, and the paradigms of violence are ones in which Woolf and Carter see no meaningful escape until much later in their respective oeuvres.

For Woolf and Carter, race and class present a less intimate problem than that of sexism; men and women are legally and socially obligated to interact, most intimately within the family structure, in order to sustain society. Woolf and Carter instead attempt, in their novels and critical works, to reconcile what they depict as the fundamentally distinct lived experiences of male and female, creating connections where there would otherwise be none. The methods of this reconnection and interpersonal communication are distinct, but the political and social aims of both authors, writing at opposite ends of the 20th century, remain the same. Ultimately these two early texts explore not only what relationships are possible

under a sacrificial paradigm and within a sacrificial society, but also how those relationships may support, mitigate, or transgress the effects of the sacrificial crisis. While mirrors uncritically reflect back the surfaces and semiotics presented to them, both Woolf and Carter show how women's agency might first blur this process—it would be much later that they would begin to see how, ultimately, to break it.

Both Woolf and Carter examine the multifarious hold which mimesis has on masculinity and their relationship to civilisation. While Woolf demonstrates how mimetic desire can perpetuate the self-destructive tendencies of war and empire, she finds no avenue for change within this paradigm. Carter, however, depicts tremendous change in the social and cultural milieu of this structure but still demonstrates the tremendous difficulty of moving outside of it. Peeling back the layers of meaning to the "real thing behind appearances"—this acknowledgement of the presence of death and violence, and this sense of wholeness which might, somehow, counteract them—Woolf is able to identify the structures of ritual and sacrifice that demand the psychic and physical deaths of her characters. But against what Woolf rightly identifies as a project of extraordinary, absolute, normalised violence—the public empire and the private patriarchy—she fails to produce a counter-narrative that can truly overcome and disempower the institutions and relational structures that utilise violence to maintain and perpetuate themselves.

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* and Angela Carter's *Shadow Dance*—two early works written on the front lines of their respective literary and historical moments—are incisive investigations into the process and dangers of mimeticism as a cultural necessity and social paradigm. While produced in disparate social and historical contexts, both authors develop literary techniques in conjunction with a shared political response to mimetic desire as a relational mode. Both interrogate the methods by which mimeticism circumscribes the lives of men and women alike, and creates unbridgeable gaps of understanding and meaning which cannot be traversed by their characters. Each recognises the ways in which women unconsciously mimic the roles prescribed to them, roles which invariably perpetuate their own victimhood. Each author recognises the ways in which women are used by men to reflect and validate their own identities. Both authors contend with the mirrors that mediate desire, and through their work, come to blur those surfaces.

Chapter Two: Recognition and Response-ability in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *The Magic Toyshop* (1967)

As explored in the previous chapter, both Woolf and Carter recognise these destructive and self-repeating patterns that both inhibit and dictate specific social bonds. The types of relationships allowed under this paradigm are constrained and inevitably bend towards unresolved dialectics and destructive conflicts which dehumanise and self-destruct the subjects involved. While, as explained, Girard did not perform a gendered analysis of his own theory of mimetic desire, Woolf and Carter, in their own ways, both touched upon the ways by which women's subjectivity is rendered powerless, inert, and ultimately in service to the cyclical process of the sacrificial crisis. As Woolf and Carter both came to conclude, women's role within this process is a tenuous position that necessitates both an active engagement with preservation of the status quo through mourning, remembrance, and repetition, but functions also as a method of mitigating the sacrificial crisis through a reflective and uncritical internalisation of the desires of male actors. As such, an alternate praxis must be put forward if the potential of women to break through this looking-glass might be realised.

Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* becomes a touchstone for this chapter as simultaneously a support for and a counter-discourse to Girard's thesis of the scapegoat mechanism. It presents, like Girard's paradigm, a means of theorising and contextualising violence as a cultural force that determines what kind of relationships are possible. A collection of five essays written by Judith Butler in the wake of the September 11th attacks in 2001, *Precarious Life* was a response to the nationalist, exclusionary, and inherently reactionary discourse pervading the United States during that time. In these essays, Butler puts forth vulnerability to others as a necessity for humanity, and designates efforts to overcome or repel or deny this vulnerability as contributing to the processes of nationalism and a potent source of state violence. Crucially, in these essays, she explores "the question of a non-violent ethics" (XVII), one specifically predicated on a shared vulnerability to violence which permeates our relational categories. In Butler's view, mourning allows us to admit and act upon the precarity and injurability of the other and oppose violence. But beyond that, mourning is the practice by which we not only admit our own vulnerability, but by extension admit and protect the humanity of those touched by violence. Furthermore, however, Butler goes on to explain how state violence—exercised through censorship and control—uses mourning to

promote a violent nationalist "cry for war" (XII) which, by extension, must create an impenetrable distinction between what is allowed in the public sphere and what must be relegated to the private and the domestic. It is, as Butler writes, "a way of establishing whose lives can be marked as lives, and whose deaths will count as deaths" (XX). *Precarious Life* is, as a whole, concerned with the social linkages which violence both sunders and inspires. So, too, is Girardian mimetics. But Butler expands on this process by positing an alternate response to the threat of violence through grief-work and mourning practices which create cohesive social bonds not predicated on the promotion of and participation in collective violence.

Butler's thesis posits that mourning and remembrance depend on an interrelational experience with the Other, and necessitate an act of recognition that changes both parties. Loss and mourning, and therefore a shared vulnerability to violence, "bring[s] to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (23). This recognition and the admission of this dependency is a radical act. As Butler notes, "To ask for recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other. It is also to stake one's own being, and one's own persistence in one's own being, in the struggle for recognition" (24). This transformative understanding of the self in concert with the other is crucial to reconfiguring desire as an act of mutual recognition rather than possession and domination. As Simone Weil describes, in her reading of the *Iliad*, "Such is the character of force. Its power to transform human beings is twofold and operates on two fronts; in equal but different ways, it petrifies the souls of those who undergo it and those who ply it" (61). Violence is, in Butler's terms, a means to establish a non-communicative relationship with the other which is dependent on domination; it ultimately effects both the abuser and the abused. It is crucial, therefore, to create alternative bonds through a recognition of a shared vulnerability to violence rather than a hierarchy imposed through violence itself.

The emergence of Butler's thesis ran parallel with the work of Jessica Benjamin on intersubjectivity in psychoanalytic feminist studies, initially most thoroughly articulated in her 1988 text *The Bonds of Love*. Her theory of the formation of self hinges on mutual recognition as a necessary component of creating a cohesive, non-hierarchical community. As Benjamin writes:

> [T]he need for *mutual* recognition, the necessity of recognising as well as being recognised by the other—this is what so many theorists of the self have missed. The idea of mutual recognition is crucial

> to the intersubjective view; it implies that we actually have a need to recognise the other as a separate person who is like us yet distinct. (23)

Girard's thesis is, as previously explained, a hermeneutics that may recover the heretofore unacknowledged and silent victims of invisible, violent processes obscured by ritual. While his explication of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism does not, as explored in my first chapter, take into account the methods by which women, specifically, engage with mimeticism and desire, the writing of Jessica Benjamin and Judith Butler might be used to supplement Girard's account with a gendered understanding of desire and the means to subvert the violent mechanisms that may result. Benjamin's pursuit of a "woman's independent desire"—separate from the *phallus,* or the pursuit of domination, in psychoanalytic terms—requires what she describes as an "intersubjective mode" in which two subjects recognize and respond to each other authentically, rather than creating an identity based on isolation and aggression. This epistemic challenge opens up Girard's theses; the recognition of the other is foundational to moving beyond acts of escalating violence.

While neither Butler nor Benjamin directly engage with Girard's theories, their work can be used to uncover the means of resistance that both Angela Carter and Virginia Woolf begin to develop across their novels. Just as an incomplete mourning and a lack of recognition of the other as a socially constituted body may be used to promote nationalist and anti-intellectual discourse, exposing others to a risk of violence, Benjamin also claims that: "Loss of mutual recognition is the most common consequence of gender polarity" (171). The violently-enforced boundaries which maintain a loss of recognition across gendered lines may be interrogated by the same method as Girard's, which examines the violent means by which society renews itself. A gendered reading of Girard's thesis can, in constellation with Butler and Benjamin, recover the methods by which Woolf and Carter found the means to resist mimetic desire. 20th century women writers "have sought alternative conceptions of subjectivity" in which "a definition of self in relationship" does not hinge upon the "maintenance of boundaries and distance, nor upon the subjugation of the other" (Waugh, 22). While *Jacob's Room* and *Shadow Dance* show the impossibilities of communication and community between men and women within the constraints of a sacrificial culture, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Magic Toyshop* both begin to explore the means by which this inability to react or respond authentically under the mimetic process may be undermined. What these later texts both come to conclude is that the ritual processes that render men and women inscrutable to one another may be peeled away if recognition is allowed to develop through an acknowledgement of shared vulnerability. Though the precariousness of a future no longer

dependent on a sacrificial culture is not explored until later in their respective oeuvres, Woolf and Carter both expand on their critical analyses of the sacrificial paradigm performed in their earlier texts.

Most tellingly, both Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* experience their limited, highly circumscribed sense of self through an encounter with the mirror that does not reflect a whole, constitutive subject; rather, the encounter these women have is with a series of consciously formed images of womanhood which are drawn together with an effort to maintain a sense of self created through mimetic desire. This sense of self, as uncertain and dependent as it is upon others' desires, is shown to be both incomplete and an act of wilful forgetting. Where women's place in both authors' earlier texts explored how women act as mediators and reflectors of men's desire, both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Magic Toyshop* begin to interrogate this process and imagine the lives and means of women who are able, in small and uncertain ways, to bring themselves away from this role. Specifically, they do this through a complex system of mourning and recognition, both as acts of experiencing and communicating loss and of sharing grief with others; this encounter with the other is communicative and therefore able to break through the strictures of mimetic rivalry. This admission of a shared vulnerability in relation to the threat of violence becomes, for the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Magic Toyshop*, the first movement towards an alternate praxis which undermines and even, in their later works, radically subverts the reliance on curative violence which Girard's paradigm demands. As Girard explicates in his theory of the scapegoat mechanism, the effect of the communal act of violence—the consolidation of the community's boundaries through an act of unified, collective violence—is only possible when doubt is rendered impossible (*The Scapegoat*, 86). Mourning, in Butler's view, is a means to create new bonds with the victims of violence through a shared physical condition of vulnerability—an act of radical compassion for the victims of violence which Girard's hermeneutics seeks to uncover. Together, both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Magic Toyshop* depict moments of doubt alongside the sacrificial crises which render the scapegoat mechanism inert.

Mrs. Dalloway **(1925)**

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf makes clear the false distinction between the private and public spheres to which women and men have been respectively relegated. "[T]he tyrannies and servilities of one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (*Three Guineas*, 142), she

notes. Whereas *Jacob's Room* followed the life of the titular Jacob and the means by which his subjectivity and agency were constructed and circumscribed by mimetic desire, *Mrs. Dalloway* demonstrates the means by which mimetic desire may be circumvented through radical acts of mourning. *Mrs. Dalloway* focuses on two intimately connected characters and their inner lives over the course of one day: Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway, a middle-class housewife organising and arranging the final details of a party to be held for her husband's career, and Septimus Warren Smith, a shellshocked soldier who sees two doctors for treatment. By the end of the text, Septimus has committed suicide and Clarissa contemplates its meaning. The text is interwoven with the perspectives and memories of various characters who, in a flowing and collective understanding of public spaces, at times break apart and at times come together in a shared understanding of their surroundings and their lives. The characters move through public and private spaces, confronting and reacting to the postwar society in which they now live. They are jaunts through "the haunts of masculine imperial and sexual power" (104), in Squier's view. These moments coalesce around symbols of authority and empire, and the sacrifices that underpin these symbols, but most importantly, they are symbols and images of collective mourning, a process which is intentionally co-opted and used to rebuild and repurpose war imagery and patriotism for the benefit of returning society to its imperialistic, nationalistic image of itself. They are, crucially, images sundered of the physical and vulnerable aspects of death. With *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf interrogates the depth, breadth, and consequences of collective mourning and the trauma of being unmourned. But more than this, it shows how acts of recognition and mourning may subvert mimetic rivalries and cross the gaps of understanding which are promoted and enforced by mimetic desire. Reading *Mrs. Dalloway* with an understanding of mimetic theory can uncover the methods by which Woolf sought to disrupt and alleviate mimetic desire, breaking the divide between life and death, public and private, and male and female.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf firmly lays out the affective foci of postwar Britain: "For in all the hat shops and tailors' shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of the Empire" (25). Indeed, this feeling for those dead in the name of Empire is felt both in the public-house and in "the ears of girls buying white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon for their weddings." Even something as private as buying lacy undergarments is intimated with the "surface agitation" of the car (25-6), which draws the attention and nationalistic fervour of all who see it. The precarity as well as the prevalence of mimetic desire and emotionality are, however, as much part of Septimus's state of mind as they circulate among the public streets of passersby in London, and the private parties of its most

lofty members. But as with Rachel Vinrace, Clarissa and Septimus both find themselves unable to solve the problem of their vulnerability and susceptibility to trauma and violence; the only solution presented to them is death.

In *Jacob's Room* the distance from death is plain; Betty Flanders thinks she can hear the guns across the channel, but she recognizes she can't, "Not at this distance", as it is only the sound of women beating dust from carpets. The words on her husband's tombstone are lies and the Roman remains are buried too deeply to be felt. This inability to recognise and respond to death is crucial; as David Sherman writes in *In A Strange Room,* "After the mass death of the war, the aesthetics of this obligation were painfully ambiguous, unfixed; it required immense imaginative work to recreate a sense of relevance and proximity to these corpses." This distance from death created difficulty even in depicting the far-away corpses of dead soldiers; acceptable images were "nearly free of British death or moral wounds" or, if they were from artists who had been to the front, "subject to censorship […] implicated in the imperatives of an elaborate propaganda campaign". One such image which Sherman cites is titled "The Great Sacrifice", which includes a crucified Christ watching over a soldier's corpse (58-9). As Sherman goes on to explain, the depiction of corpses was so heavily restricted that often war artists replaced them metonymically with images of crosses which assured those at home that "the British dead ultimately remained secure in their graves" with a "sense of some hovering, quasi-religious force" to guard them (63). This substitution of the physical corpses with the ritual of their burial in service to propaganda is crucial; even the act of burial can obscure the victims of the war. Margot Norris, in her *Writing War in the 20th Century*, notes that much "home front" literature includes the war invading in the aftermath—the boundary of war and peace and the temporal boundary of war and its aftermath become confused (32). While Betty Flanders, like the other women left behind during the war, are too distanced from the deaths of their sons, *Mrs. Dalloway* brings the death to London's streets and London's middle class parties in direct contradiction to the "enclosed absence" of the Cenotaph (105-6). Sherman's reading of Woolf's works investigates the presence and relationship to death and corpses within her texts, but he does not investigate the ambivalence towards mourning practices she would begin to articulate in *Jacob's Room* and further develop in *Mrs. Dalloway*. While Sherman reads Jacob as "the Cenotaph-character […] the absent corpse of her own earlier character"—a self-referential act which reveals the irony of her commemorative desire (106)—the present corpses of both Clarissa Dalloway's living death and Septimus Smith's state-mandated suicide interrupt the Empire's narratives and create connections that bridge these gulfs of communication.

From Jacob Flanders to Septimus Warren Smith

While Jacob represents the man *in potentia*—the promise—and the sacrifice finished, Septimus Smith has instead already had that fully-formed self taken from him by his exposure to violence. Jacob dies abroad, but Septimus returns home to die a different kind of death, in which his ability to respond authentically and to mourn authentically has been removed through a subjection to and a propagation of violence. Jacob and Septimus are the two paths available to men touched by the war: death, or a type of inner death, both inflected with violence, both dependent on violence as part of their culture's maintenance. Septimus has been surrounded by violence—"having perpetrated it" and "having suffered it", "living in fear of it" and "planning more of it" (*Precarious Life*, 28). But it is not, as Sarah Cole explains, a "civilian culture of peace" (*Modernism*, 184) into which Septimus refuses to be acclimatised, but instead a violent refusal enacted by him in order to acknowledge the twin gods of Proportion and Conversion to which Britain has sacrificed so many, including Jacob Flanders. The "peace" into which he refuses to be acclimatised is one based on the sacrifice of himself and his comrades, and the guilt he feels at not dying is the guilt impressed upon the scapegoat in a sacrificial culture.

Septimus's inability to feel a connectedness stems from his inability adequately and properly to mourn the deaths of those he has left behind. As a soldier who has returned from the war, on his return, "[e]verything had come to a standstill" (20). He had "developed manliness; he was promoted" (130). The war, however, has left him without connection and without, he feels, a body, denuded of flesh, left with only the vulnerable points of feeling that were, at the time, indicative only of the mind—the rest of him has turned to that "sheet of plain glass" as Woolf describes in her work *On Being Ill* which is the exposed soul somehow bereft of bodily sense: "Why could he see through bodies […] His body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left" (102-3). Disembodied, he has become a ghost, a memory of the war, like the unexploded mines and bombs that imperilled Europe for years after the war. Septimus, as Cole notes, "might at any moment detonate and self-destruct […] with his consciousness holding a residue of the war's unabated pain" (Cole, 179). Septimus's forced use of violence is, to use Judith Butler's description, "[…] a touch of the worst order, a way a primary human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way, a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, a way in which life itself can be expunged by the willful action of another" (*Precarious Life*, 28).

Specifically, Septimus ceases to be human—not only does he lose the ability to recognise and respond to others, he has been removed from the realm of the mourned in the same way that Evans has. Evans is presented to us in the text specifically as an unmourned death, as Septimus "congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime" (*Mrs. Dalloway*, 130). This unresolved loss is explicitly the means by which Septimus loses his ability to communicate himself and his understanding to those around him. To turn back to *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler explains the paradoxical nature of the unmourned:

> If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. But they have a strange wray of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again). They cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never "were," and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness. Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object. The derealization of the "Other" means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral. (33-4)

This spectral nature is examined fully in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but is present within *Jacob's Room* as well; there is a prevalent reading of Woolf's earlier text as an elegy of not just the death of Jacob, but for all the young men who were caught up in the war. Alex Zwerdling takes on this thesis in '*Jacob's Room*: Woolf's Satiric Elegy' in *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, and it is further developed in Laura Marcus's argument concerning Woolf's elegaic style of novel writing (Marcus, L. 82-113). Rachel Bowlby describes Jacob's voice as that of a ghost or spectre in her work, *Virginia Woolf and Feminist Destinations* (87). Theodore Koulouris, who has written on Woolf's engagement with Hellenism and loss, expands on this observation by Bowlby in 'Jacques Derrida in Virginia Woolf: Death, Loss and Mourning in *Jacob's Room*' (2011). Using Derrida's concept of loss and vocal presence, the dislocation of voice from a speaker, identity, or "epistemological coordinate", Koulouris shows how Woolf attempts to give loss a voice, and mourning a tangible presence through *Jacob's Room*. Indeed as Koulouris observes in his reading, Jacob's death "comes very early" when his name is shouted above the waves; the "vocal presence of his name at such an early stage in the novel proscribes in the act of naming the significance of absence" (69).

This same absence is articulated in both *Mrs. Dalloway* ("Evans!") and *To The Lighthouse* ("Mrs. Ramsay!")—"uttering the name […] links the subject with the foundation prospect of death" (69). Death is indeed apparent throughout each vocal presence in the novel; the voice of Seabrook is "the voice of the dead", while "her son's voice mixed life and death inextricably, exhilaratingly" (10). But the echoing of Jacob's name is a thematic constant, like the tombstones that echo and whisper in the graveyard as Mrs. Flanders sits

knitting. There is a requirement to name the past and create this fictionalized version to remember and imitate; Jacob's father is mentioned only as a name and an occupation which is, admitted only by Mrs. Flanders, incorrect (10). Even Jacob's surname, Flanders, evokes the wartime poem *In Flanders Field* that calls out: "We are the dead" (McCrae, 3). It is this knowledge to which Septimus Smith is inextricably bound, and for which he is called to death himself and inevitably dies.

In *At the Violet Hour*, Cole recognizes as a crucial aspect of modernity the dissolution of the foundational interpersonal bonds between men, and she sees Septimus as a "striking image" of alienation, as opposed to the "battalion pride" of male community-forming institutions (181). Woolf saw this also, and sought a culture in which these bonds were not based on boundaries subject to periods of mimetic violence in order to maintain them. Woolf specifically utilises the imagery of scapegoating, sacrifice, and rejection in describing how Septimus views his place as a survivor of the war:

> Look the unseen bade him, the voice which now communicated with him who was the greatest of mankind, Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society […] suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer, but he did not want it, he moaned, putting from him with a wave of his hand that eternal suffering, that eternal loneliness. (37)

Septimus is a "last relic straying on the edge of the world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world" (140). He is, in Woolf's words, a "relic", a piece of the past, placed outside the "inhabited regions" to look on and witness the machinations outside him. But on this threshold between life and death, he is unable to articulate himself or to position himself in time or place for the dead are alive before him:

> The word "time" split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself—
> "For God's sake don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead.
> […]
> A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried, raising his hand (as the dead man in the grey suit came nearer), raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone ... and with legions of men prostrate behind him he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole- (105-06)

Septimus is "the giant mourner" of the desert, an Ozymandias toppled; however, instead of proclaiming his greatness, he is cognizant of his own dismantled empire. There are "legions of men prostrate behind him" and the desperate revelation is unspoken. With this inability to mourn, the dead go unrecognised. His lack of feeling is a lack of connection not

just with his fellow soldiers, but with the other on a grand scale; he marries his Italian wife, Rezia, out of fear, but is unable to communicate with her. "[H]e became engaged one evening when the panic was on him — that he could not feel […] truce signed, the dead buried" (131). But Septimus's attempt to create connection through marriage, to prove that he is still human despite the devastating losses he has been forced to undergo by his participation in, and experience with, violence, does not restore this connection. The dead come back to haunt him; Septimus cannot connect through marriage, an institution that, at present, divides the sexes further.

When Rezia attempts to use the sight of a passing aeroplane to rouse Septimus from his dissociative state—"for Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband […] take an interest in things outside himself" (31)—it comes as one of several portents for Septimus as "the birth of a new religion" (33). Cole writes how the airplane symbolizes the change from war to peace, it "flies inevitably rendered as aristocrats of the military […] the full enmeshment of violence and aesthetics" (*At The Violet Hour*, 25-6). The airplane is another symbol of the war entering civilian life—a new technology crafted for violence but repurposed for a capitalist peacetime. As the bombs mix with the sound of beating carpets in *Jacob's Room*, the drone of the aeroplane overhead complicates the distance from death and from men's spaces in this supposedly post-war society. This religion, and the ritual that Septimus senses will be born with it, is the one for which he will be sacrificed: the maintenance of peace in the wake of war.

Clarissa Dalloway

We see this social underpinning of violence through Clarissa's perspective just as much as we do through Septimus's; Clarissa's private spaces are as inflected with death and imperialism as Septimus's public spaces. Susan Bennet Smith draws an explicit link between the rest cures prescribed to hysterics and the traditional mourning period imposed in Victorian households; both were "imitation deaths imposed on women", a "reduced existence for a fixed period of time" (Smith, 313). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, this imitation death is explicitly linked with the mimetic process which renders women reflective surfaces; this reduced existence is obvious both in Clarissa's understanding of herself alone as well as her shift and her new accommodation of the loneliness of Peter Walsh:

> It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that

> moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment. (47)

It “split its thin skin and gushed and poured” but only expresses the “inner meaning” of the “crocus”, briefly, before the moment closes up again, burning as brightly and as revelatory as the "diamond" of feeling present in her memory of Sally later in the text. But Clarissa is ultimately unable, due to the trauma of her sister’s death and her own heart-related illness, to connect fully with those around her in the outward flow with which she understands these moments. Clarissa is a character who constantly desires contact, even intimacy, but doesn't have the means or the language to achieve it. In her narrow, isolating attic bed she imitates death but dreams, instead, of flowers and blushes at her memory of the moment with Sally. Abel tells us that this scene is powerful due to “the intermeshed male and female imagery, and the interwoven language of sex and mysticism, a mélange that recurs in Clarissa’s memory of Sally’s kiss. Fusion—of male and female, active and passive, sacred and profane—is at the heart of this erotic experience” (37). But still she lies in her bed, alone. It is a purely insular experience, as elegiac as any other memory.

It would be remiss, however, to think of Clarissa has having no capacity for self-reflection; Clarissa “alone knew how different, how incompatible” the parts of herself are—it is only with “some effort” that “one centre, one diamond” can be gathered in order to be shown off to the world. The mirror shows her that “pointed; dartlike; definite” Clarissa, pared down so she can be “the same always” and a “refuge for the lonely” (55). While the mirror shows Clarissa a whole and unified self, it is at the expense of an inner life which cannot be perceived by the mirror, for “All was for the party” (56), including this drawing together the one meaning of Clarissa that she sees mirrored before her. It takes a conscious, almost creative effort for Clarissa to deny the pieces of herself that are not reflective of what others want her to be, as "All was for the party" is a mantra she keeps repeating to herself as touchstone for her own sense of self. For women in the mimetic paradigm, a unified subject is at the expense of a discrete subjectivity.

The continuous interruption of Peter Walsh in the text comes to reinforce this idea. Peter embodies an unrelenting mimetic desire, full of jealousy and envy of others, desiring Clarissa because the successful man, Richard, has taken her for his spouse. Peter, a man who believes he has mastery over everything,[9] that what he says will absolutely be true, as “she

[9] Much later in the text, Peter "did not agree that we know nothing. We know everything, he said; at least he did” (294)

will see me" (59) — "here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India" (61) as he grows "more agitated" and jealous of Richard Dalloway's marriage to Clarissa. Peter thinks himself "a failure […] compared with all this" (64)—all this being material middle class life, the "inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the chair-covers" (64)—and at these thoughts he takes out his knife (65). While Peter proclaims Clarissa "sentimental" (54), it is ultimately he who is the most sentimental of all the characters of the text, investing objects and people alike with meaning and significance for himself well beyond their capacity to sustain.

She looks at Peter and he, embarrassed, takes out his pocket-knife (60), using it to point at her dress. His grief rises "like the moon […] ghastly beautiful with light from the sunken day". Even his grief is a pale reflection of something much brighter. "There above them it hung, that moon" (62-3). This moon, the reflection and memory of Bourton, haunts them both; it antagonises them. But her "look", "passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away" (64). She is unable to articulate and impart to him the feeling of herself and her life—she is unable to fully mourn the loss of that moment with Sally and the potentiality that offered to her before the interruption which Peter affected. This rupture with the past—as Septimus experiences as well—continues to haunt the present moment. Instead, Clarissa and Peter return to their reflective surfaces, unable to accommodate one another; Clarissa and Peter "challenge each other", as Clarissa gathers together that same dartlike, pointed "diamond" of her self to "come about her and beat off the enemy" (66).

Peter Walsh's egotism compels him to make Clarissa jealous by mentioning his woman in India; Peter's Daisy only becomes lovely as he makes Clarissa jealous, stokes her "indomitable egotism" which wins out takes hold of her (67). And Peter, too, sees it in oppositional terms; "I know what I'm up against, he thought, running his finger along the blade of his knife, Clarissa and Dalloway and all the rest of them; but I'll show Clarissa—" but then Walsh breaks down into tears (69). He knows, implicitly, that they are further separated by these feelings of jealousy that he is attempting to inspire; these connective moments of feeling are building ever larger walls. And, further to this, Clarissa is compelled to comfort him; she will be the perfect hostess, as she was in the mirror, whatever others need to see in her—ready to receive and reflect the other as he needs. Though Clarissa asserts earlier, "[n]o vulgar jealousy could separate her from Richard" (44), this moment makes her

feel as though he has left her; “I am alone for ever”—“take me with you” she thinks, staring at Peter who stands “dry and desolate” and “masterly” before her (70).

But Woolf makes a distinction between mimesis and genuine interpersonal connection: “with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish […] Never could she understand how he cared” (10). Clarissa reminds herself that she did not marry Peter because of how he would dominate her; Clarissa’s recurring memory of her kiss with Sally Seton is overshadowed by the trauma of having the moment interrupted and ended by Walsh: “Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it […] when old Joseph and Peter faced them […] It was like running one’s face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!” Abel interprets this scene as a violent one, that Clarissa's relationship with Sally is not allowed to exist on its own terms as a point of genuine interpersonal and interpenetrating connection—"a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up […] the revelation, a religious feeling!" (53). Clarissa’s memories of Sally Seton are described to us in sexual and embodied terms. It is a memory of interpersonal connection without obligation and duty, outside the normative modes of regulative society.

Peter Walsh

But Peter Walsh is unable, just like Clarissa, to admit a vulnerability, despite depending on her emotionally. He leaves Clarissa feeling "hollowed out, utterly empty within. Clarissa refused me, he thought. He stood there thinking, Clarissa refused me” (74). Following Clarissa's own walk, we now follow Peter as he travels through the city—however he is, in contrast, possessed of his own thoughts to the point of pressing others into his fantasies. He watches a group of young soldiers marching up Whitehall: "Boys in uniform, carrying guns, marched with their eyes ahead of them, marched, their arms stiff, and on their faces an expression like the letters of a legend written round the base of a statue praising duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England” (76). They are engaging in a public act of mourning, as

they bring "the wreath which they had fetched from Finsbury Pavement" and convey it to the Cenotaph. They are possessed of "one will", with "life, with its varieties, its irreticences, had been laid under a pavement of monuments and wreaths and drugged into a stiff yet staring corpse by discipline" (76-77). These rituals of remembrance glorify imperial power: "It is, thought Peter Walsh, beginning to keep step with them, a very fine training" (162). Like Jacob Flanders, the young men are being trained for death as much as for remembrance. The "man in grey" who Septimus mistakes for Evans is Peter Walsh at this moment, and the text shifts its focus to Peter's thoughts, as he extols the virtues of this "enchanting" postwar London, "the civilization, after India, he thought, strolling across the grass" (107). Walsh is mistaken for Evans come back to life, a miraculous renewal through death that allows Walsh to stroll unaffected through the civilisation created and maintained through violence. Elizabeth Abel sees the war as Walsh's interruption on a grander scale, masculine interruption and intervention on a global level (41); it is exactly this masculine intervention that traumatises Septimus in the same way that Clarissa is traumatised. Susan Bennett Smith in 'Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*' sees "Clarissa's stroll through Westminter and up Bond street in the novel's opening pages" as reflective of "her position as a woman unambiguously integrated both into her feminine role and into her society, unquestioningly accepting her confinement in the private sphere and completely identified with the competitive, instrumental values of its patriarchal rulers, even to the point of self-denigration" (Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London*, 100). She is a woman fully enmeshed in the culture that sustains her at the expense of men like Septimus.

But then, Walsh finds himself standing under the statue of Major General Charles George Gordon: "Gordon whom as a boy he had worshipped; Gordon standing lonely with one leg raised and his arms crossed,—poor Gordon, he thought" (77). Gordon was a British Army officer from 1852 until his death in 1885 at the Governor-General's palace in Khartoum, Sudan. This death, in an uprising after a long career serving England and the British Empire, led to an enormous display of public mourning. Like the statue of Achilles in *Jacob's Room,* it fixes a particular history and national narrative onto death and war; Gordon was depicted in near-hagiographical accounts as a Christlike figure sacrificing himself for the benefit of the empire.[10] Statues were erected and mourning was coopted to reinforce

[10] See Farningham, Marianne. General Gordon, the Christian Hero. London: Walter Scott Publishing Co, 1890. Smith, George Barnett. General Gordon, the Christian Soldier and Hero. London: Partridge, 1896. Churchill, Seton. General Gordon, A Christian Hero. London: James Nisbet, 1891.

nationalist discourse; it was Woolf's Bloomsbury companion Lytton Strachey who, devoting a chapter to Gordon in his text *Eminent Victorians* (1918)—a "set of mouth bungled hypocrites" he wrote to Woolf in November 1912—painted him as a man given over to a fatalist understanding of his faith, which could explain both his selfless charity work as well as his violent impulses during wartime.[11] As a memorialized figure, Strachey and Woolf both use Gordon as a symbol of the means by which mourning is used to create boundaries rather than carve out connections. While Walsh thinks "poor Gordon" and recognizes his loneliness, he does not recognize these insights, but instead feels "as if inside his brain by another hand strings were pulled, shutters moved, and he, having nothing to do with it, yet stood at the opening of endless avenues" (78). These impulses exist beyond him; while he has no sympathy for the young boys' "corpselike" (Squier, 106) movements through rote actions of public mourning, Walsh has sympathy for a long dead statue to a failed imperialism.

This phase is completed with Walsh following a woman along the street, imagining a conversation with her, pressing on her all kinds of imagery. He creates a masturbatory fantasy, conjured for himself using the template of the living woman he has caught sight of in the street, while "stealthily fingering his pocket-knife"—"she became the very woman he had always had in mind" (79) Despite his inability to see beyond himself and his own desire, he watches her escape into a house along one of "the little streets" off Great Portland Street; he recognizes it as "making oneself up; making her up", but still "quite true"—"all this one could never share—it smashed to atoms" (81). These moments are neither authentic nor connective: Walsh is projecting onto her his own desire and thereby annihilating her as a reciprocal being.

Women and Mimetic Rivalry

The machinations of mimetic desire are not as closed off to women in *Mrs. Dalloway* as much as they are in *Jacob's Room*; the violence and militarism is, as explored previously in Woolf's earlier text, here supported and imposed by women as much as men. As Kathy Philips writes in her chapter 'Devouring the Lamb', "Carrying this savagery [of colonization] into the twentieth century, Lady Bruton exposes, behind her noble sentiments, their true basis in force […] behind the façade she is not only forceful in business but likely to be combative on the field" (9). Violence and militarism have a way of infecting all who engage in its practices. Similarly we see Miss Kilman, who by her name is aptronymically linked with the bitter jealousies and envy that pervades her being; Miss Kilman inserts herself between

[11] See Strachey, Lytton. *Eminent Victorians*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1918.

Elizabeth and Mrs. Dalloway because of her own desire. Miss Kilman's desire for Elizabeth's love is not out of genuine feeling for Elizabeth, but rather an envious, rivalrous triangulation with Clarissa Dalloway, for as Kilman understands, Clarissa "had revived the fleshly desires" (194) in her with her mockery. Likewise, Clarissa's "soul rusted" at the thought of "embittered" Miss Kilman:

> For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered in to itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman; had become one of those spectres with which one battles in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants; for no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kilman! But not in this world. No. (16-7)

Clarissa then experiences physical pain at this thought. She is angry that "this woman" had "taken her daughter from her", (190) possessive of Elizabeth. Though she recognizes her hatred is an arbitrary feeling inspired by bitterness and emotive contagion, she cannot bring herself to love Miss Kilman. These fleshly desires are specifically a reflection of the bitterness and hatred Miss Kilman cannot control. Kilman is "bitter and burning", turned away from school for, by her own account, refusing to see the Germans as villainous. But she has no qualms now in making a villain of Clarissa, as "If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying, You are right!" (189). She carries a "violent grudge" (195). Even as Elizabeth and Miss Kilman shop together, Kilman is "looking, again and again, at a plate of sugared cakes", and watches as a child takes the cake. For "[s]he had wanted that cake — the pink one. The pleasure of eating was almost the only pure pleasure left her, and then to be baffled even in that!" (197).

But while Clarissa and Kilman engage in this rivalry over Elizabeth's affection, "[Elizabeth] could not bear to see them together." The love that both Clarissa and Kilman have for Elizabeth is oppressive and impositional—this emotional possession turns Elizabeth away from herself and towards "her gloves" both under Clarissa's eyes and as she tries to escape from Kilman: "She looked for her gloves — her white gloves. They were under the table. Ah, but she must not go! Miss Kilman could not let her go!" For Kilman desires to "clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and forever and then die; that was all she wanted" (199-200). This desire, possessive and self-destructive, frightens Elizabeth as much as it instils Clarissa with desire. Even at the party, before learning of Septimus's death, Clarissa recalls Kilman; "Kilman her enemy. That was satisfying; that was real. Ah, how she hated her — hot, hypocritical, corrupt; with all that power; Elizabeth's seducer; the woman who had crept in to steal and defile (Richard would say, What nonsense!). She hated her: she

loved her. It was enemies one wanted, not friends […] She was for the party!" (265-6) Here, party is defined as much by who is excluded from the event as who is invited.

The most polemical section within the novel is the exhortation to the twin goddesses of Proportion and Conversion, upheld most vocally and performatively by Dr Bradshaw and his wife. Lady Bradshaw typifies the type of woman Clarissa is meant to emulate as the wife of an important man, whose "slow sinking, water-logged, of her will into his" is depicted as a product of her marriage (152); her will is, under Girard's paradigm, utterly subsumed into his as a product of his own mimetic desire. Her parties are of "eight or nine courses, feeding ten or fifteen guests", but in the evening there is a doubt "that the poor lady lied". Just as Clarissa must hone the points of herself down to a dartlike visage in the mirror, Lady Bradshaw is "quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oilily for dominion, for power, she cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned, drew back, peeped through" (152). But while the guests of her parties can leave their home with "relief", Sir William's patients do not have this luxury (153). For, "He swooped; he devoured" and "He shut people up"—and those people are described pointedly by Woolf as "victims" (153-4). Conversion and Proportion, the impulse "to override opposition, to stamp indelibly in the sanctuaries of others the image of herself […] the friendless received the impress of Sir William's will" (154). This would be better understood in Girard's paradigm as possession or effacement, the means by which one's will is overriden by another's under the mimetic process—these goddesses ultimately "loves blood better than brick, and feasts most subtly on the human will" (152).

But this does not go unrecognized; Rezia "did not like that man" (154), and immediately Clarissa connects Septimus to the influence of Sir William Bradshaw, and she understands implicitly that he "had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it—if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that?" (281). Here, Clarissa recognises that the oppressive strictures that drove Septimus to his suicide are the same as those that would compel Mrs. Bradshaw to total effacement; Woolf uses this as a point of sympathy between Clarissa and Septimus, recognising the process of mimetic desire which would lead both to their death.

Mourning, Public and Private

While the young boys on Whitehall leave wreathes on the steps of the Cenotaph, the Cenotaph is an empty tomb—the bodies of the victims are far away and not symbolically necessary. In fact, they get in the way of the war narrative, as Septimus's body is impaled on a fence, disrupting both the physical and symbolic boundaries imposed by sacrifice, mourning, and the memorialisation of the war. He moves swiftly from inside to outside and, in his public death in defiance of the interiorisation which is imposed upon him and his illness, gives Clarissa the "treasure" which he promises the two doctors, "I'll give it you!" (226).

But at the moment of Septimus's inevitable suicide, he does not want to die. He considers each method of death available to him ("one musn't spoil" the breadknife, the razors have been packed, and the gas fire is too low) and settles on the window even though "it was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's […] Holmes and Bradshaw like that sort of thing." Ultimately the last question he asks himself is: "Only human beings—what did *they* want?" before he is "vigorously, violently" thrust down onto the railings (226). The crack in the question—the elision marked by the em-dash—is unknown to us and Septimus. Whether the "you" he gives his death to is the "old man" opposite staring at him, or Holmes at the door, is unknown.[12] But he understands, implicitly, that human beings require his death in this sacrifice. The railings separate peacetime from wartime, so Septimus impales himself on the railings as he violates the boundaries between death and life. Evans was "beyond the railings", and so Septimus physically and metaphorically tears the railings apart, bringing death to the fore; but it is only Clarissa who understands this message he sends to the world and recognises the hidden victimhood of Septimus that hides behind the ritual of carrying his body away. Because, while Clarissa is the one to respond authentically to this sacrifice, it is still witnessed by a passing Peter Walsh, who sees the ambulance carrying Septimus and exclaims that it is "one of the triumphs of civilisation". This triumph, this "communal spirit" in which they live, accepts Septimus's death, as "respect" is shown the "victim". In Peter there is "a little glow of pleasure, a sort of lust" as he thinks over the "doctors, dead bodies" (229-30). The proper death of Septimus only confirms, in Peter's mind, the necessity of the doctors who drove him to it, and consolidates the importance of death as a cornerstone for civilisation.

[12] Earlier in the text he describes Holmes as having the name "human nature" (141), implying that he recognises that the doctors are agents of the scapegoat mechanism.

But in contrast to the petrified and empty mourning witnessed by Peter Walsh on Whitehall, the grief and memory of Rezia and Clarissa is specifically embodied. However, Rezia's grief is, as Susan Bennet Smith explains, immediately medicalised and treated by Holmes (Smith, 315). Though she witnesses her husband's death and "she saw; she understood", she drinks the sleeping draught and it drags with it the memory of "a flag slowly rippling out from a mast" and how "Men killed in battle were thus saluted, and Septimus had been through the War […] strewn she felt, like flying flowers over some tomb" (227-8). The medicine administered by Holmes essentially strips Rezia of her understanding, leaving her with the thin, stretched feeling of the mourner laid over her husband's wartime grave. Instead of being allowed to understand his suicide, she is pressed into the role of the war widow by those worshippers of Proportion and Conversion. Clarissa is, instead, allowed to fully mourn and experience Septimus's death sympathetically. She sees that this act preserved "A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter." As "[d]eath was defiance […] Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (280-281). As Clarissa's inability to articulate her own loneliness and her own trauma impedes her understanding of herself and others, this "counter-trauma" as Sheehan describes, is "a restorative, antipodal movement, freeing its violent aesthetic from the compulsions of antagonism and disharmony" (Sheehan, 172). It is an experience of violence which, under Butler's analysis, reifies interpersonal connection rather than destroying it.

In contrast with this reading, however, some critics such as Squier have seen Clarissa as complicit in Septimus's suicide, and on a par with the Prime Minister for declaring the war and Bradshaw for his inhumane medical practice (117). Simliarly, Martin Hägglund convincingly argues that Clarissa aids in the preservation of the status quo with her urging Sally not to take public revenge on Hugh Whitbread for his assault on her (72). Though Sally interjects in parentheses, "she herself was extremely happy", moments later she admits, "Are we not all prisoners? She had read a wonderful play about a man who scratched on the wall of his cell, and she had felt that was true of life—one scratched on the wall. Despairing of human relationships […]" (293). Sally's sexual trauma creates this rift for her which she still finds inexplicable even now, married and matured. But Clarissa is, like Septimus, only a product of the society that produced the Great War and its victims—they can hardly do more than what they are prescribed. Their connection, their protest, is a radical shift against the

momentum of their age as well as the gulf of difference that precludes their understanding. Clarissa balks at the idea of death being at her party but ultimately death was always going to be there. Death is, like the Cenotaph, the centrepiece of empire: normalized, accepted, chatted over at its middle-class parties. But it is the educated man's daughter who recognizes it, and uncovers its mechanism in her small, unspoken way, and sympathizes with the war's terrible aftermath even in the midst of her much longed-for party. As, in Girard's words, "Unanimity is a formal requirement; the abstention of a single participant renders the sacrifice even worse than useless–it makes it dangerous" (*Violence and The Sacred*, 113), Clarissa might, through her epiphanic moment, come to an understanding of the weight of the mechanism that allowed her party to exist; she might, also, exist as a subject freed from her outward mirror, finally able to be seen. "For there she was" (296). But as Mrs. Flanders moment of clarity with the shoes comes at the expense of her son's life, Clarissa Dalloway's moment of clarity has come at the expense of the life of Septimus Smith.

Woolf makes us interrogate the roots of this epiphanic moment in the violence beneath. Like the necessity of Clarissa's feeling Septimus's death in her body, and like the insistence on looking at the "dead bodies and ruined houses" of the wartime photographs described in *Three Guineas*, there is a demand to look and experience that is a requisite for understanding, confronting, and ultimately altering this unending path to violence which composed both Septimus's sacrificial suicide and the victims of the Spanish Civil War.

Judith Butler writes in *Precarious Life* that Freud "changed his mind" (Butler, 20). on what constituted a successful, completed mourning process. Beginning with the theory of displacement or exchange, Freud advised in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), first published in the UK by the Woolfs' own Hogarth Press, that mourning must be transferred from one object to another for it to be rendered complete. But, as is shown by Betty Flanders's admitted lies on her husband's tombstone—or the question over her dead son's shoes—these objects simply obscure and leave unanswered questions concerning the real life of the mourned. Freud then, in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), took aspects of his description of melancholia and determined that incorporation was a necessary part of the mourning process. However, when Septimus plunges with his treasure, granting it to Clarissa through her interior understanding of his experience, nothing has meaningfully changed. Clarissa returns to her party, and Septimus remains left with the war dead, his widow medicated into complacency. Woolf demonstrates that interiorisation is conformist in its results; what she does not attempt until *To The Lighthouse* is a counter-paradigm, and so *Mrs. Dalloway*

remains a rendering of its "complexities" rather than "a cure for the violent condition of survival" (72).

One of Woolf's concerns was showing how "any psychological structure—any configuration of expectation and hope—is vulnerable to breaking down. […] A temporal being is by definition vulnerable to trauma, since it can never repose in itself and is exposed to an undecidable future" (62). Thus it becomes easy for Hägglund to state how there "is no way to come to terms with the double bind of finitude, no way of approaching life that would allow one to accept death resolutely or immunise oneself from the traumatic impact of being mortal" (78). But in my reading, it is a profound acceptance of that impact that instigates the change that Woolf feels is necessary for a life free of mimetic violence. There is a prevalent desire in Woolf's writing to reach this enclosed absence but not to be entombed inside it; Clarissa is, unfortunately, already experiencing a living death by the time the novel opens. However, the physical, the experiential, is important—Septimus's physical death is a more potent disruptor of the war narrative than the fragile monuments are able to maintain and control, and Clarissa's act of mourning is one that counters the state-sanctioned remembrance that is, in essence, a selective forgetting that must exile Septimus.

Christine Froula's deft reading of Woolf's work finds that, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the power of memory "defeats time and loss" in "a diamantine 'present' preserved from time, death, loss, absence" (99-100). This preservation is the key to understanding women's role within the sacrificial crisis; these memories are kept, maintained, and preserved by women alone, and the loss is felt and kept hidden from public view by these same women. J. Hillis Miller argues this insistence on repetition is "the representation of a transcendent spiritual realm of reconciliation and preservation, a realm of the perpetual resurrection of the death" (202). These readings are challenged by Hägglund, but even he sees Woolf's project as "the precarious possibility of survival"—not immortality, but endurance through being "separated from oneself" (67). His reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* states as much, but he does not look too much further forward in Woolf's oeuvre. Hägglund rightly asserts that "death is a tragic descent and not a spiritual ascent"; the driving force of the political critique is pointless if death is a truly viable alternative to an oppressive life. But the ambivalence of death is neglected in Hägglund's reading. It is not that death is preferable, but inevitable; to be alive as Clarissa is the same as being dead as Septimus, both clutching their treasures and unable to rearticulate the past or the present into a better paradigm. They are stuck in an endless repetition, with women picking up the pieces and setting them back where they were at every implosion of violence and heroism. Death might be a "trap door", an escape into a site that

sits radically outside of life's strictures, but it is still a "trap". There is a pervasive, overarching sense that one must turn inward in order to maintain a sense of self that is untarnished by the constancies of existence; that death is a preferable state to falling into the living trap of empire.

The Magic Toyshop **(1967)**

Carter's second novel, *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), was the work which won the John Llewelyn Rhys prize in 1968 and which first granted her national attention. A stark shift from *Shadow Dance, The Magic Toyshop* follows the life of fifteen-year-old Melanie after the death of her parents and her relocation to her Uncle Philip's house in London. As the title suggests, Uncle Philip is a toymaker and puppeteer. But more than this, he is described as "a master" (64). Melanie is, like the heroines of the gothic novels and fairy tales from which Carter continuously drew throughout her work, forced to traverse the patriarchal family structure in order to undermine its processes of self-replication. As I have examined, Susanne Kappeler—who criticized Carter's fairy stories on the grounds of uncritical repetition—defines a feminist critique as one that explicitly *challenges* the self-replication of patriarchal forms. This replication is, specifically, "the rearticulation of an unchanging archetype, reiterated in the patriarchal culture at large, which recites the same tale over and over again, convincing itself through these rearticulations of the impossibility of change" (146). It is Carter's aim to disrupt this rearticulation, to suggest a means of change and lay a foundation for others to perform it. Elaine Jordan, in her essay 'Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions', writes on love as a major theme within Carter's work; she interrogates "free love" in *The Sadeian Woman*, in which the libertine cannot accept truly free love because he requires "the existence of an authority to defy" (Jordan, 20). However, Jordan makes a distinction between love as "caring" and love as "chilling desire", whereas "something like [caring] is fundamental to active identity, to well-being in the world. Value for such a foundation is hard to combine with projects that unsettle learned assumptions and familiar affections" (21). This necessary distinction between love and desire is foundational to Carter's understanding of the means by which men and women are precluded from a mutual recognition. This distinction is predicated on mimetic desire and a repetition of past structures of social cohesion, as explored in *Shadow Dance*, but comes to a sharper critical point in *The Magic Toyshop*. As Jordan goes on to explain, "Each of Angela Carter's longer fictions represents a process of change. They are questioning journeys to no final home,

which remember but are not detained by nostalgia" (22). While the "change" is arrested and incomplete in *Shadow Dance*, it opens up into a greater sphere of possibilities in *The Magic Toyshop*, both of inclusion and of resistance.

Carter achieves this through a metonymy of fragile paper, mirrors, and wood which conducts the artifice that conceals, reflects, and obscures the flesh and blood bodies of the characters. In her texts, Carter uses the female body to comment on and critique canonical figurations of male creative power—a male creative subject reproducing himself, his thoughts, and his social structures through the mediation and mirroring of a passive female object. In a continuation of her critique of the mimetic process, in which women are the agents of men's desires, the reproduction of symbols which engender oppression are, inevitably, played out over Melanie's body; it is also, however, over Finn's. *The Magic Toyshop* becomes an examination of the means by which flesh and blood subjects become desired objects, and how a displacement of flesh with paper, puppets, and photographs is one of the most prevalent but also the most precarious modes of mimesis. Melanie, in essence, enters a world where the real and the representational intermingle to devastating effect (83).

Jean Wyatt's reading of the text makes explicit the link between Philip's creative imagination and the creative power of the patriarchal imaginary—both are brutish, overpowering, and limited (64). Wyatt's reading locates the radical refusal enacted by Finn as the turning point in the novel, but where Wyatt identifies Finn as voluntarily rejecting the patriarchal scripts provided by Uncle Philip, she neglects Melanie's own reflective state, and the metaphors of creative reproduction that would render both Finn and Melanie mere mirrors or puppets for Philip's endless stage shows. But more than this, *The Magic Toyshop* represents the instability of a culture in which violence is foundational, and how acts of violence erupt and escalate due to mimetic desire. The novel depicts an act of apprenticeship which devolves into a series of violent acts that threatens to engulf the family and home in unending violence. Each piece of mimetic action is framed within a visual scene: by the mirror, the photograph, the peephole, or the stage. But the uncritical reproduction with which Carter has often been charged is interrogated and literally set aflame in this novel. It is precisely this passive reproduction of archetypes that Carter countered in her work; an analysis of *The Magic Toyshop* reveals her deep antipathy towards this kind of patriarchal replication of which she has been accused. Both Melanie and Finn refuse to perpetuate the seemingly timeless and unchangeable roles demanded of them by Uncle Philip, where Finn's place would be one of power and Melanie's one of powerlessness; instead of a sacrifice or a

curative act of violence which is enacted by the community, the violence is quelled by an act of recognition and response to pain.

The text opens with Melanie's obsession with iconographies of women and the language of conquest and colonialism, "a physiological Cortez, da Gama or Mungo Park" (1) while she "posed in attitudes", as a "Pre-Raphaelite" or "A la Toulouse Lautrec", "too thin for a titian or a Renoir but she contrived a pale, smug Cranach Venus" (1-2) while she "stared at herself, naked, in the mirror of her wardrobe" (1). She "gift-wrapped herself for a phantom bridegroom" (2) and watches the "mirrored play" of her body. "She stuck moon-daisies in her long hair and looked at herself in her mirror as if she were a photograph in her own grown-up photograph album" (6). Here, Melanie enacts what Carter later decries in *The Sadeian Woman* as the "conciliatory nonsense" (5) of femininity.[13] Though Melanie finds she is made of "flesh and blood" (*The Magic Toyshop*, 1) she uses her bedroom mirror to reenact representations of women (1-2); inevitably her corporeal body becomes an imposition on these specific fantasies when it does not align with them, causing her undue anxiety (3). Most importantly, her understanding of herself is mediated to her through a successive series of framed images, from the paintings, to the photographs, to the mirror in her childhood bedroom. Even her parents are remembered as pure iconography: "Shoes under the bed", "an empty tobacco tin", their bed "as generous and luxurious as a film star's" (9). "When she thought of her mother and father, their clothes seemed part of their bodies, like hair or toenails" (10). This is expressed most violently with the photograph of her mother on her wedding day: "Her smiling and youthful mother was as if stabbed through the middle by the camera and caught for ever under glass, like a butterfly in an exhibition case" (12-3).

The immobilised picture of her mother, pierced and preserved in a wedding dress, draws Melanie to the same dress now stored in a trunk. Though the dress is too big, she finds herself replicating the same image of the virgin bride caught under the glass of a mirror (16). She moves from mirror to mirror to make sure each reflection is the same, and cries "Look at *me*!"; when she moves into the garden, she is "the last, the only woman" (16-7). She is, again, returning to faceless scripts of femininity. Suddenly this restrictive fantasy turns to solitude; the enormity of the symbolism overwhelms her. The permeations of her flesh stain the dress, which cannot stay white; she has bled on it already (19). Melanie is forcefully dragged from her bridal fantasy by her own corporeality; she bleeds and destroys the emblem of her

[13] Carter describes the derivation of all pornography from myth, but foremost of all is the myth that "equates the woman to the passive receptivity of the soil" but in this self-deception "she loses herself completely… The moment [the lovers] succumb to this anonymity, they cease to be themselves… they engage at once in a spurious charade of maleness and femaleness" (Carter, *Sadeian Woman*, 8)

mimetic desire, the white dress that makes her into an image of her mother. Where at the start of the text she initially offers up her own body as a means to reproduce masculine archetypes of women, the anonymising feature of this kind of reproduction proves too frightening—the recognition of her own powerlessness which returns later in the text when she first views Philip's puppet theatre.

Removing the dress to climb the apple tree, she perceives her own physical body as being literally denuded of flesh (21). Without the dress, she is stripped of her own corporeality. Melanie is then informed of her parents' death; the image of the mother, heretofore experienced in the text only as a smiling virgin held captive in a photograph, is extinguished. When she hears the news of her mother's death she looks at herself in the mirror;

> She met herself in the mirror, white face, black hair. The girl who killed her mother. She picked up the hairbrush and flung it at her reflected face. The mirror shattered. Behind the mirror was nothing but the bare wood of her wardrobe.
> She was disappointed; she wanted to see her mirror, still, and the room reflected in the mirror, still, but herself gone, smashed. (24-5)

As with Clarissa's "diamond", "dartlike" drawing up of herself in the mirror, Melanie understands her self as purely relational and specular. The objects of her mimetic desire—classical and decadent paintings, imaginary photograph albums, her mother's image under glass—inform her sense of self and her understanding of her place within the economy of male desire. Though she moves from mirror to photograph, she finds that without referent the image of the wedding day is emptied of meaning. "The wedding-dress was gone and the woman was gone and the man was gone", and Melanie removes the photograph from its frame, tears it up, burns the picture, and even smashes the frame that contained it. When she comes to her mother's makeup box, her grief is expressed in a mask of "crimson and black" from her mother's lipstick and mascara (26). She is told pointedly to become "a little mother" to her siblings, in the wake of her own mother's death. The dress, tattered and bloody, is laid to rest by Melanie in the absence of her mother's body (28). Her parents' death is linked in Melanie's mind to the destruction of the dress—and she attempts to destroy all representation in this same way. However the patriarchal family structure is resurrected in the text with Uncle Philip and Aunt Margaret. In order to fully destroy these representation, Melanie must fully traverse them. With this, she is inducted into the realm of semiotics and ritual, in which her body is a form of symbolic currency over which she has no control.

> Part of herself, she thought, was killed, a tender, budding part; the daisy-crowned young girl who would stay behind to haunt the old house, to appear in mirrors where the new owner expected the reflection of his own face […] An amputee, she could not yet accustom herself to what was long and gone, lost as her parents scattered in fragments (31)

Stripped of her sense of self, Melanie is violently sundered from the identity she had created through her childhood mirror. And though Melanie does not encounter any more mirrors in the text, she must resist further sublimation into the patriarchal imaginary – as Lorna Sage writes in her analysis, "there are no mirrors and no books, *because it is the world you find in books and mirrors*, the regions of copies and images and representations."[14] (*Angela Carter*, 1994, 15-6). Melanie has stepped inside the mirror and so must grapple with the representations she has internalized. And, as Melanie's initial interactions with the mirror render her new-found flesh into mere objectifying representation, Philip's intent is to transmute flesh into wood. As Susan Gubar notes, within the patriarchal creative imagination a woman is "the ivory carving or mud replica, an icon or doll, but she is not the sculptor" (244). Both puppet and woman are created things, to possess and manipulate. These avatars permeate the text; Melanie first encounters Philip first through the interdictions and possessions he has left to enforce his will, as Melanie's own face, carved and grotesque, leered at her from a jack-in-the-box he made for her as a child (12).

Like the photograph of Melanie's mother, her aunt Margaret is reduced to a spectral image on her wedding day, her voice mysteriously vanishing on her marriage to Uncle Philip. "The new aunt had been a shadow in her mind, a wispy appendage of the toymaking uncle. Now she had a substance because she had a characteristic. Dumbness" (37). As with her first encounter with the photograph, Melanie implicitly understands the ritual of the wedding dress: "Had he already sacrificed his smiling bride to the dark gods?" (13). When he first appears in the text, Philip holds a gigantic mug with the word 'Father' written on it in rosebuds, seated in his "patriarchal majesty" whereas Aunt Margaret is "frail as a pressed flower" (73) and a "wind-up putting-away doll, clicking through its programmed movements" and "without volition of her own" (76). At dinner, Aunt Margaret "presided" over the feast set out for her brothers and the children "with placid contentment" (47). She mothers Victoria with "a naked, maternal expression on her face which Melanie found both embarrassing and touching" (48). But when she hugs Melanie it is with a "stiff, Dutch-doll embrace; her arms were two hinged sticks, her mouth cool, dry and papery, her kiss inhibited, tight-lipped but somehow desperate, making an anguished plea for affection" (48-9). While the role her aunt inhabits is one of prescriptive maternality, it does not engender a communicative relationship between them; rather, Melanie recognises that the role imposed on her aunt is one in which she is diminished into a doll-like, inanimate object. But while

[14] Lorna Sage, *Angela Carter* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994) 15-16.

Melanie recognises that her aunt “wanted babies”, the question of whether she wanted “Uncle Philip’s babies” becomes central to Margaret’s character (78). While seemingly subsumed by Philip's will, her refusal to become a mother for him—and the eventual discovery of her incestuous infidelity—become critical to the text's sacrificial crisis.

Finn as Inheritor

Despite the weight and gravity of Uncle Philip's presence, the central relationship in the text is between Melanie and her uncle-by-marriage, Finn Jowle. Unwashed, uncouth, overpowering, and mercurial, he follows in the same vein as Honeybuzzard. But instead of being representative of a 1960's libertine attitude which would render him independent and therefore unaccountable to others, Finn is depicted as enmeshed within a familial structure that both helps and hinders him. Melanie's intrusion into this structure both opens up the possibilities for him to reconstruct and refigure himself into a new man, unlike Uncle Philip, but also tests his commitment and his adherence to a mimetic social order.

When Finn looks at Melanie the first time it “went over Melanie like a wave; she submerged in it. She would have been soaked if it had been water” (34). While Finn is introduced in the text as kind, obliging, and helpful, it is when he is finally alone with Melanie that he “put on the quality of maleness like a flamboyant cloak”. His gaze “slithered and shifted like mercury on a plate”, this sudden mutability of his manners frightening to her. And while she beholds him as a “tawny lion”, her victimhood remains in question. The maleness she perceives as both frightening and alluring is a cloak he puts on, much like the dress in which she felt both exhilaration and terror. Simultaneously she imagines the “lover made up of books and poems […] crumpled like the paper he was made of before this insolent, off-hand, terrifying maleness” (45). She recognises these desires and performances as veneer, an imitation, a performance—yet sees the power they can hold over both Finn’s manner and her relationship with him. It is in this moment that her will is supplanted by his own—her first act of mimesis perpetuated by a man rather than her mother.

> ‘Come here,’ he said again, softly.
> So she went.

But the action changes from an interaction between maleness and femaleness into something “ordinary”—he had “stopped playing with her”. This, for a reason she cannot fathom, bitterly offends Melanie. Her femaleness has, in essence, been rebuked into an ungendered normalcy (46). This shift from maleness is just as abrupt and just as piqued as Finn’s shift into maleness. But despite his shifting manner and appearance, Finn too acts as

an avatar for Uncle Philip's impositions. When he notices Melanie has worn trousers that morning, he shouts "violently" that this is "a walking affront" to his rules. "I know [Uncle Philip] very well" Finn explains, as he rises "choreographically". Beyond the comic display of the false teeth and Aunt Margaret's muteness, this is the first time we hear Uncle Philip's voice, though it comes from Finn's throat. While Uncle Philip has the power to render the women around him mute, his power over Finn is one of directing another's speech to his authoritative voice (62-3). Uncle Philip is, after all, a "master" whose puppets are his hobby—and not simply the literal puppets in the theatre, but the force he exerts on the inhabitant of his house in order to exert his will through them (64).

The toys Philip constructs are pastiches and grotesque mirrors of the living things around him. The cuckoo clock is made of "a real cuckoo, stuffed, with the sounding mechanism trapped, somehow, in its feathered breast". Meanwhile, a live parakeet waits in the shop with its leg chained to the counter, mimicking human speech, while stuffed birds wait patient and quiet in the cage in the kitchen, but twitter mechanically at the touch of a lever. The house is filled with mimicking devices, as the live bird, "hearing the sweet, mechanical noise, set up a loud jabbering: vehement, meaningless syllables as though incoherent with anger because he thought the toys were mocking him" (42). Similarly, Uncle Philip overtly mocks Francie's and Margaret's music by re-casting them as monkeys playing Irish music (65). Everyone in this house is trapped in imitations of themselves. And these pastiches have weight: Uncle Philip crafts tiger masks which a young boy buys, and the child "Striped in a tiger mask […] feinted across the counter at Melanie; she bit off an exclamation. The mask was quintessential tiger, burning bright with phosphorescent paint. It was quite bestial, ferocious. She did not think the masks were nice toys for young children." The masks themselves inspire a type of masculine violence and fear which the young boy emulates. Even his final selection is "the face of an elephant in rut" (80). When Melanie tries on the masks herself "there was no mirror where she could see herself, although she felt peculiarly feline or vulpine according to the mask she wore" (84). Uncle Philip's power is, ultimately, his ability to possess his victims.

But when Melanie inspects the Noah's Ark piece carved by Philip and painted by Finn, she sees that Finn himself is on the boat as a small painted Japhet. While Finn might remark that their circumstances are similar, Melanie understands that their material and social conditions preclude this from being true, for "he was in the ark and would presumably survive any deluge" (86). She recognises here that Finn has a relationship with Uncle Philip that she can never emulate. Earlier in the text, Finn, dressed as Mephistopheles and offering

hidden gnosis, brings Melanie downstairs to Uncle Philip's puppet theatre, and draws back the curtain to show her the distorted mirror of the stage on which a tulle-wrapped and black-haired inert doll lies waiting. Philip's life-size *sylphide* puppet hangs useless, waiting for the puppeteer to take up her strings and give her life , and Melanie begs him to close the curtain (67). Finn explains that this theatre is Philip's "obsession […] And sometimes he lets me pull the strings. That's a great day for me." However, Carter highlights the ironic curling of his voice as he says these words (67-8). But even as Finn imparts his reluctant complicity in the puppet theatre, Melanie recalls her time in the garden before her parents' death: "She was in the night again, and the doll was herself." Finn, in a gesture of sympathy, tries to comfort her with his own sadness; Melanie, in turn, cries for him (68-9). But while Finn mimics and mocks him, he does nothing to undermine Philip's authority (74). When Finn has injured his hand and is unable to work, he stays with Melanie in the shop—contextualised in the novel as the women's space, mediating between the creator below and the customers above—when he flings the monkey mockery of Francie and Margaret against the wall. "'Rot him!'" he shouts, while "it shattered against panelling and crashed to the floor in jagged shards of tin" (114). His destructive desire mirrors Honeybuzzard's in *Shadow Dance*, as "'I should like to smash it all up,' said Finn, who had been beaten. He looked young, a little boy, as he said this and like a little boy who has been thrashed by playground bullies and cannot do anything in return but hate them" (115). Violence and hatred, here, is contagious. He expresses his desire to take his siblings back to Ireland, but when confronted with Melanie's welfare he says "It's every man for himself" (115). His rage is childlike in that he cannot help but respond to Philip's anger with his own; his emotional response is mimetic and reactionary, and only perpetuates the abuse and violence of Philip's power. Even his desire to escape is cast in terms of othering: he excludes Melanie and her siblings from his personal fantasy of freedom. As he sits and broods, his eyes are "veiled and murderous" (116). Benefitting from this place as Philip's apprentice, he has neither the means nor the desire to change his ways. He can pull back the curtain, but cannot, as of yet, cut the strings.

While Uncle Philip has existed heretofore in the text through impressions—both as photographs of himself and as other characters enforcing his impositions—the first physical presence of Uncle Philip is one of authoritative violence: he strikes Finn for breaking his rules and Finn, in turn, takes steps to rectify his mistake (69-70). At the dinner table he sits in a "shirt-sleeved, patriarchal majesty […] his authority was stifling" (73). He demands more and more food while Aunt Margaret leaves her own behind to sate him (73). Where Melanie's mother exists as pure iconography, Uncle Philip is pure ontology: his presence,

whether it exists bodily or not, is felt by Melanie wherever she goes in the house. He is made of a different "texture and substance", despite his shared origin with Melanie's mother. However, his irrational violence falls on Finn, and Aunt Margaret—as insubstantial and mute as a photograph herself—acts as a soothing intermediary between these two generations of men (92). These hierarchies which Uncle Philip imposes—as with any hierarchy—requires enormous violence to sustain.

And these hierarchies impose themselves between Melanie and Finn in multifarious and tragic ways. Melanie and Finn traveling to the fair wasteland is at once a movement away from the oppressive patriarchal home of Uncle Philip and yet an unmistakable rehearsal of prescriptive roles found within the structure. The deserted ex-fairground makes Finn "curiously elegiac" (102) and Melanie sees her being in this space as "a deep gesture of friendship" that she, unfortunately, cannot yet reciprocate (102). As of yet, she can't recognize herself without a mirror (103), though feels reassured when she is able to see "her own face reflected a little in the black pupils of his subaqueous eyes. She still looked the same" (105). He grins as he moves to kiss her, "closing his eyes so that she could not see herself any more" (105). She imagines the pair of them as "a shot from a new-wave British film […] She wished someone was watching them, to appreciate them, or that she herself was watching them […] Then it would seem romantic." However outside of the iconography of the kiss, she is terrified, she "convulsed with horror at this sensual and intimate connection, this rude encroachment on her physical privacy, this humiliation". The kiss further distances Melanie and Finn from one another and from understanding the other's position. While Finn is routinely visited by Uncle Philip's physical violence, he cannot sympathise with Melanie so long as he is capable and willing to exert sexual violence upon her. In this way, Philip has opened up and perpetuates this rift between them that cannot be closed without a necessary rejection of this mastery. "Finn kept hold of her no matter how hard she struck him […] When she grew calmer, he slowly released her and she walked away a few paces, staggering […] turning her back on him" (106). Helpless to his impositions, she can't help but allow him to kiss her; "she could not move or speak […] she was very startled and near to sobbing" (105). She becomes, under his direction, "Stiff, wooden and unresponsive, she stood in his arms and watched herself in his eyes. It was a comfort to see herself as she thought she looked" (105). This moment of comfort is at the expense of her physical and emotional wellbeing; she is, in that moment, "wooden and unresponsive" like an inert doll for him to manipulate—exactly as Margaret is to Uncle Philip. This is reinforced when Melanie peers into the peephole which Finn has, presumably, created to spy on her; she reverses this and

spies, instead, on the brothers' room. She sees "beside the mirror […] So she was not only watching but being watched when she thought she was by herself, when she was taking her clothes off and putting them on and so on. All the time, someone was watching her. All the time she had been in the house. They had not even let her keep her own loneliness but had intruded on it […] At this, she decides that Finn "was no friend of hers" (109-10).

Belonging and Mimesis

One of the properties of mimetic desire is the need to be a part of a community; existing outside of one is at once dangerous and effacing. Melanie longs to feel "at home", and she abhors feeling "insecure in her own personality" as the house and its strictures are unfamiliar to her (58). She feels "connected to neither" of her siblings (82). Uncle Philip's rule would not permit bonds to anyone but himself. But still the Jowles persist; while Finn frightens Melanie and acts as an avatar for Uncle Philip's desire with her, there is a shift when the siblings are without him. The inside/outside of the family is expressed plainly: "They loved one another and did not care who knew it. Their love was almost palpable in the small room, warm as the fire, strong and soothing as sweet tea. And Melanie, seeing them, felt bitterly lonely and unloved" (43). She recognises that she is outside of this circle of love and, while longs to be a part of it, still rejects their outward attempts to connect with her initially, as "Finn came and sat beside her and gave her another cream bun, which she accepted gladly as a token of friendship, though she did not want it". Later, her eye pressed to the keyhole of the brothers' bedroom, Melanie witnesses the family community to which she is implicitly excluded (50). She dreams of roses: "Now, who had planted this thick hedge of crimson roses in all this dark, green, luxuriant foliage with, oh, what cruel thorns?" But more than that, she is "imprisoned in a century's steadily burgeoning garden" (53). The "red people" are edged with centuries of thorns which preclude her joining them.

Melanie's desire to belong is expressed in envy and bitterness, feeling unable to express herself or connect with those around her. "She was sitting in a cinema watching a film […] Watching a film was like being a voyeur, living vicariously […] She envied them bitterly." But she rejects them as well, for being "common", questioning whether she wants to belong to them at all (76-77). "But in spite of all that, they were red and had substance and she, Melanie, was forever grey, a shadow." She blames "the wedding-dress night" and imagines herself in Bluebeard's castle, (82-3) a Gothic heroine trapped by both a physical maze and familial ties. It's only after she faints—having hallucinated a severed and bleeding hand in the

knife-drawer— that they respond to her vulnerability and “she loved them, all reservations gone. She had not realised they could reach out from the charmed circle of themselves. Now she felt part of that circle” (123). However, this community comes with these same thorns, as the condition of her inclusion not only necessitates her to be subject to Philip's violence but also to her hatred of him, as “Melanie chose her side the night she thought she saw the hand; she began to hate Uncle Philip” (124). It is Uncle Philip's violence that fringes even this understanding of vulnerability with the threat of violence and control.

The first time Melanie attends one of Uncle Philip's performances, the descent to the puppet theatre is described “as for going to church” (126). It is a place of ritual and reenactment, a space set apart for the performances that will dictate how they perform their lives. Put bluntly, Uncle Philip describes his puppet shows as a “microcosm”, with an image of himself holding the globe of the world in his hand. He places himself above the curtains to bark his directions at Finn and Francie (126). Melanie and Aunt Margaret are meant to applaud energetically and appreciate the performance, to applaud “until their hands hurt” (127-8). Their place, as women, is to uncritically reflect his will just as the puppets do. Even the Queen puppet “wore a collar like Aunt Margaret’s but it could not chafe her neck because she was made of wood. Aunt Margaret surreptitiously ran her finger round her own silver choker as if the sight of the Queen’s collar had reminded her how much her own one hurt” (129-30). But the pain bears down on Finn as much as it does on Margaret; Finn, an inept puppetmaster, tears the strings of his puppet accidentally and is thrown from the flies by Philip. “Crashed onto the stage on his back, lying across Bothwell, whose cloak was the colour of blood” (131). “He looked broken like the toy he threw against the wall”, while “*He*’s not going to work my lovely puppets again” Philip decrees. He kicks Finn’s body from the stage but lovingly gathers up his broken puppet (132). The narrative linking between the toy broken by Finn and Finn’s own body; Finn cannot exert violence the way Philip has in order to move past his role as inheritor of these rules.

After “the fall” (134, 135), Finn has irreparably changed. Now “only Uncle Philip was real to [Finn] any more” (134). He has been completely subsumed by the violence. Tearing the puppets from their strings, he removes the first “flamboyant cloak” of masculinity and trades it for a bloody one, and soils the stage with blood coming from his mouth (133). Like Melanie’s climb through the apple tree, Finn undergoes a humbling transformation that precludes him from possessing the kind of oppressive, generative power of Uncle Philip. But he has also removed himself from any kind of communicative feeling, as he has moved into a “glass box” while other “scratched on the glass” for his attention. He, mute and gaunt like his

sister (134), can do nothing but accept the violence. And “violence in the house was palpable. It trembled on the cold stairs and rose up in invisible clouds from the thread-bare carpets.” It has a miasmatic quality that makes even Victoria’s cot “like a rat-trap” (135), changing everything that it touches into something hostile and unable to sustain any bonds outside of itself. While the family home is initially built upon violence to maintain it, Finn’s vindictive and explicitly mimetic violence threatens to overwhelm it with dire consequences. Most strikingly, this desire for violence intercedes in the relationship between Finn and Melanie. “Finn forgot her; she was a child. He could easily forget her”. Melanie is “too young, too soft and new, to come to terms with these wild begins whose minds veered at crazy angles from the short, straight, smooth lines of her own experience” (136). As now, “[Finn] lived, now, in a country where presents and affection and loving and giving meant nothing” (141). Finn has, like Septimus, lost his ability to feel.

But unlike Septimus, whose death is a communicative act witnessed and understood by Clarissa, Finn does not consider the lasting consequences of his violence upon the women in the household. And as in *Shadow Dance,* the overt and open rivalry between the men is borne over the bodies of Aunt Margaret and Melanie. Even Finn's self-sacrifice is a relationship solely between himself and Uncle Philip, and he persists regardless of the consequences for his sister and niece; Margaret becomes the “face that of the Virgin in a pieta” (133) and then begins to place herself between Uncle Philip and Finn, as “She waited alone in the kitchen for her husband to kill Finn. Melanie knew what she was waiting for although she had not told her. Melanie expected it herself. Her uncle, in a fury, would lunge at Finn with a knife or a block of wood. Finn, sullen, vindictive, was forcing the killing blow to come to him.” Aunt Margaret’s “face was a tragic mask, that of a woman who has sent all her sons to a war and waits hourly for the death telegram” (135). She is in a place where she can only watch the fathers kill the sons. The mimetic rivalry between the two men can no longer be mitigated or intercepted by Margaret’s actions; she is, in this moment, helpless but to witness the escalating rivalry. And while Melanie recognises herself as “very strong, young and vital and tough”, trusting her body which is “resilient” compared to her aunt’s “bird bones and tissue paper, spun glass and straw”. But they are both still “put away in the same close airing-cupboard, this grey, tall house. Would her strength wither away?” (138).

While Finn has been fully transformed into a puppet, mimicking Uncle Philip's violence, this is borne over Melanie's body in a literal way. Uncle Philip orchestrates another one of his microcosms with Melanie as Leda acting opposite his puppet swan. It is explicitly linked to Melanie's previous understanding of herself as a woman; when Aunt Margaret

presents the Leda dress to Melanie and she puts it on, “All at once, Melanie was back home and swathing herself in diaphanous veiling before a mirror”. When she asks “What am I?”, the answer is “Leda” (141). Philip has the power to transform her into the pubescent girl subject to violence, as “This is how he sees you” Margaret explains. “[H]e saw her as once she had seen herself. In spite of everything, she was flattered” (141). Despite the reflections she embodies situated firmly within patriarchal oppression she is still pleased to perform these commands. This continues when she goes to Philip's workshop below, as Philip commands her and she “obeys” (143), and her voice is reduced to a “whisper” in the face of his questions; Philip “was resenting her because she was not a puppet”.

> ‘Turn round.’
> She turned round.
> ‘Smile.’
> She smiled.
> ‘Not like that, you silly bitch. Show your teeth.’
> She smiled, showing her teeth.

As Gubar notes, “[t]he female body has been feared for its power to articulate itself” (246). However, “articulation” here becomes the literal articulation of one’s own limbs – Melanie is beyond Uncle Philip’s direct control, and because she cannot be shaped and moulded and built to his specific whim, he resents her. Still Philip claims Melanie and her siblings as his own, “To make into little Flowers” (144). To make Melanie into a puppet, to enforce his own cultural scripts upon her body and control her limbs, would render her as one of his children—in the sense of a replication and extension of his own will.

And while Melanie is used by Philip as a puppet, he pulls the strings on Finn as well; Finn is told to “rehearse” Leda and the Swan with Melanie, with himself as the swan. But when he speaks, “[h]is voice was softer than a goose’s neck, almost inaudible” The fragility of his demand is plain in his foreshadowing of the demise of the swan’s thin neck (145). Finn is, like the swan, strung up with invisible threads so that Philip may exert his will upon him. When he tries to mimic the movement of Leda, he “creaked, indeed, like a puppet” (148). When he declares that he is the swan, Melanie “could hardly see him” behind the mask of his beard and hair (148). But she cannot take it seriously, and she laughs; Finn reacts in horror. As with Philip, Melanie “obeyed him”. She is, at first, unconcerned but when she sees that he is serious her “laughter trickled to nothing […] no hint of a smile or inflection of tenderness which might mean she would be spared” (149). The sexual violence is implicit in the scene but Finn’s actions are subdued by an unwillingness to perform them. Melanie “was utterly subdued”, her consciousness completely overcome by “the boy whom she touched all down

the length of her but did not touch". Finn, who smells "of decay", "looked like a death-mask of himself. It was killing him to leave his isolation, but leave it he must" (149).

However, when Melanie expresses her hatred of Uncle Philip, it creates a moment of compassion between them, though it is fleeting: "Their eyes met and looked away again." And, in the end, Finn refuses; he cries 'No' and runs to hide in the cupboard (150). The "tension between them" snaps like the strings of a puppet and Melanie "fell limply back" (150). She finds him "all small and disconsolate and shrivelled looking, knees drawn up under chin in a foetal position" (151). It is, to Melanie, "the real beginning of a deep mystery between them", as she sees him untethered from Uncle Philip's desire. "He's pulled our strings as if we were his puppets, and there I was, all ready to touch you up just as he wanted. […] Go up and rehearse a rape with Melanie in your bedroom. Christ. He wanted me to do you and he set the scene" (152). Finn explains that Philip wants him to do this to "pull [Melanie] down", "You represent the enemy to him […] you're something to change and destroy. […] he thinks I should do you because he despises me, too, and he thinks I'm God's scum." It is all to spite Melanie's father, but she says immediate "My father is dead." But it is "all the same" to Philip (153). Philip is not in control of the mimetic process; even he lives in a world of substitutions and representations. He is no more master of the real than Melanie or Finn. He relies totally upon these systems for his control of others but also for his sense of self.

Escalation and Effacement

Despite this moment of consolation and understanding, Finn tells her that "I'm going to make him murder me" (155), and the brothers engage in acts of violence which escalate what will become, by the end of the novel, a full-scale sacrificial crisis. "The shop had the look of a battlefield the morning after" (155), and Francie and Finn burn an Uncle Philip in effigy in the form of a small doll; these men can make Philip into a puppet, briefly, a power outside of Margaret or Melanie's purview. But Melanie "kept her head under the blankets so that she would not see the magic light" (156-7). In response, the ritualistic manner of the dinner table takes on a scene of surrogate violence, as Uncle Philip "plunged the carving knife into its belly" when he sees the surreptitious Christmas goose served by Margaret, and he "attacked the goose so savagely […] the reeking knife in his hand, he gazed reflectively at Finn. For a moment, Melanie feared he had merely been trying out the fatal blow on the goose and now, action perfect, would use it on Finn" (160). Finn's violence against the effigy Philip, and the

"softer than a goose's neck" Finn is too ready to trigger the crisis as he is stabbed in effigy by Philip at the dinner table. Melanie is, however, the next battleground over which these two men fight; Melanie understands implicitly that her safety is dependent on her performance for Uncle Philip: “She thought, wincing, of what he might do to her if she performed badly, thought of her fresh blood staining the little stage". And even at the performance, Finn still watches her from the flies, pinning her with the lights; “Over her head, Finn and Uncle Philip rustled and murmured”, indistinguishable from one another above her (164). At this moment, with Melanie on the stage and about to face this act of simulated violence, Finn and Uncle Philip occupy the same space. However, when the swan appears, “It was a grotesque parody of a swan […] It was nothing like the wild, phallic bird of her imaginings. It was dumpy and homely and eccentric. She nearly laughed again to see its lumbering progress” (165). But even so, she imagines the swan is filled with “pigmy Uncle Philips” who will “savage her”, and the “possibility seemed real and awful” as she lies on the ground before it. Then, as Philip commands, the swan “wreaks his will” (166); it descends on her like a rape in a way that Finn refused, and its “gilded beak dug deeply into the soft flesh”. Dissociated from her body, “She screamed, hardly realising she was screaming. She was covered completely by the swan but for her kicking feet and her screaming face. The obscene swan had mounted her.” She mistakes the sound of the curtains closing for the sound of the ocean; she is completely transposed into the scene, possessed by the role and by the swan (167) and even when the scene is over and the swan, flaccidly "hung on its strings, pathetic now its motive power was gone, waving about a little from side to side” (167). Philip “put his arms round the neck of the limp swan” (168) in a loving embrace of himself.

At the dinner table that night Melanie is “rapt” at the weight of Uncle Philip’s presence and in awe of his transformative power. However while he *seems* to bring dead wood to life—turning "wood into swans"—Melanie also recognises this process as static and self-repeating, and prone to violence. Philip is as “heavy as Saturn”—the Saturn who ate his children for fear that one would rise up against him. But Melanie's trauma excludes her from understanding, as "her eyes returned again and again to the plausible distortion of the witch-ball. She found herself wondering which was the real tea-table and which was the reflection […] Everything was flatted to paper cut-outs by the personified gravity of Uncle Philip” (169). She is unable, due to her trauma, to distinguish between the real and the imitative; in this moment, she has lost herself to the mirror image.

In response to Melanie's symbolic rape, Finn takes the puppet swan and chops it "into small pieces" with Margaret's axe (171), then takes it and buries it in the pleasure garden. “It

must have been like the wedding-dress night. In the pleasure garden, Finn had walked in the forests of the night where nothing was safe. 'I have been in that place, too,' she thought. She could have cried for them both" (172). Like the wedding dress as a symbol of defilement and death due to its eminently stainable colour and shroud-like metonymy, so too is the puppet swan capable of inspiring both laughter and fear; however, like the dress's "white satin", "white tulle" and "virtue" (13), all of which indelibly disintegrate in contact with the fleshly and the real, the swan's rubber neck is eminently choppable and its white feathers easily torn away. Symbols are fragile; it takes oppressive force and unyielding effort to keep them alive, and violence both actual and symbolic to sustain them. By chopping the phallic swan's neck—described in the text as an obscene phallus beneath his coat— Finn refuses, in Wyatt's view, the "masquerade of masculinity" and accepts his own castration (72). But the violence Finn enacts on the swan is just another impotent ritual, like the effigy and the goose and Melanie's sexual assault by proxy. "I'll kill the swan for him." Finn says of Uncle Philip. "He'll murder you" Melanie responds, understanding that this escalation of violence can only end with an act that will destroy one or both of them. She understands that "the swan was too big, too potent, to all at once stop being." She sees that "so much work went into it", and Finn responds how Philip "put himself into it" (174). The swan is another substitution, like all of Philip's puppets which only move according to his will.

Even so, Finn returns to Melanie without pretence and without either that flamboyant cloak or the glass box in which he can no longer feel; frightened and in need of comfort, Melanie understands his fears, and together they disrupt the static myth of irreconcilable difference and hierarchy that would keep them from recognising their mutuality and their need for recognition. "It had been a bad day for them both. She felt that somehow their experience ran parallel. She understood his frenzy" (173).

The Sacrificial Crisis

The text comes to a head in what can only be described as a sacrificial crisis, a bacchanal in which the violently-imposed order of the patriarchal household breaks down under the weight of its own maintenance. But Girard's paradigm recognises that the sacrificial crisis is the end state of a community that demands restorative violence—and brings the community back to a forgetful state before the violence occurred. Girard describes "instances where a member of the community is delegated to assume the role of the unworthy king, the anti-sovereign […] We now have the true pharmakos: the king's double, but in reverse." He

provides an example in “those mock kings who are crowned at carnival time, when everything is set topsy-turvy and social hierarchies turned upside down; when sexual prohibitions are lifted, and theft permitted; when servants take the place of their masters and women exchange clothing with men; when, in shortest he throne is yielded only to the basest, ugliest, most ridiculous and criminal of beings.” But this inversion of roles is still dependent on the dichotomy of the sacrificial crisis to function, as “the anti-king is expelled from the community […] and his disappearance puts an end to all the disorder that this person served to symbolise for the community and also to purge for it” (*Violence and The Sacred*, 132). In *The Magic Toyshop*, on Philip's departure the house is filled with “festivity” (183) and “carnival” (185). Finn sits in Uncle Philip’s chair (“It can’t engulf me.”) and “He sat at the head of the table like the Lord of Misrule […] Soon it seemed quite normal for Finn to be seated there” (183). The chair invests him with “authority”, where he seems “taller and of more consequence than usual” (185). But the reversal of the power structure, at least in terms of which male is the father, is not enough for the breakdown of the stifling social roles. The authority of the chair is still in place, even if he sits in it—even if it's destroyed. Finn takes Uncle Philip’s ‘FATHER’ mug and smashes the cuckoo clock with it, joking “There goes the time” (185). However, the underlying danger which permeates their actions is obvious to Melanie, who knows that "nothing would go right" if Margaret dresses as she usually does on a Sunday—as "the figures in the photograph might come alive" and Uncle Philip would return to kill them all (188). Even Finn is “straining to be happy. It was not spontaneous, he was trying too hard.” And he proposes that when Uncle Philip returns, “I shall hit him […] That’ll fix him! It will be easy. I never thought it would be so easy” (191-2). He has not, as of yet, broken his puppet strings, as the ritual purging of the festivities reverts into its violent origins; "Instead of holding violence in check, the ceremonies inaugurate a new cycle of revenge” (Girard, 142). But the cycle of revenge is broken in *The Magic Toyshop*—counter to Girard's paradigm in which acts of escalating violence lead to a unifying act of collective murder, the sacrificial crisis is instead quelled by an act of sympathetic connection. This radically undermines Uncle Philip in a way that curative violence—Finn striking back against Philip in a violent outburst—inherently cannot.

It is only when Finn demands that she look at him and Melanie responds “Why” rather than obey him that their true transformation begins to unfold; when she turns to look, “They looked at each other. […] As in the pleasure gardens, she saw herself in the black pupils of his squint […] tangling like the puppet strings on the night of the fall. She sat in Finn’s face; there she was, mirrored twice.” Instead of moving away from the scene and viewing herself

as a spectator, there is an acknowledgement of a mutual possession and a mutual control. Rather than one simple master, they are tangled together (193). She is no longer controlled by him and he no longer desires to have mastery over her.

At this, Margaret and Francie's embrace in "a lover's embrace, annihilating the world", an act of irreparable disorder to the family structure. "Francie and Aunt Margaret locked together in the most primeval of passions", the secret a "hieratic and ancient presence" (195). In this way incest is seen as a necessary component of undermining the patriarchal family structure; both the legal and social boundaries that separate them are destroyed in this moment. And when Uncle Philip finally returns to see his carefully constructed puppet home destroyed, he attacks Aunt Margaret and Francie, as "This was the final point to which time flowed", the end point of the sacrificial crisis (196). And while Finn is initially confused at this—assuming that it was he who was Philip's rival and the one on whom Philip would enact his violence—ultimately it is Margaret's sexual disobedience that finally brings the patriarchal house to its burning end. At this, Margaret is able to speak again (196), finally free of Philip's control. Uncle Philip destroys his own chair in his desire to burn the house and everyone in it (197); he is willing, like Honeybuzzard, to upend the game rather than admit defeat. But he, also like Honeybuzzard, is left to face the consequences of his violence, and he burns to death in the wreckage of his own home.

While John Haffenden would see the garden as descriptive of an "escape from the toyshop like Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden", in which "Melanie's sexual awakening" becomes the central focus (Haffenden, 80), and Linden Peach, conversely, sees them "trapped by the Genesis myth" (Peach, 85), T.E. Crow places this imagery within the context of 1960s science fiction in which "a new Eden" and "an elemental pair" were common themes, and Carter adapts them ambiguously (Crow, 47). Simon Goulding sees it as a more hopeful conclusion, in which the garden provides "an image of rest and peace" (Goulding, 191). which the interior of the house, with its constrictive and obscurant familial bonds, cannot provide. The surmise is the unknowingness and the potentiality of the moment after a catastrophe. Finn and Melanie, sympathetic and without pretence, can move forward without the roles assigned to them. They can recognise each other and respond authentically to their emotions and selves in a way that Philip, with his puppets and playthings, impeded. The scene does not, as it did in the previous garden space, end on a kiss in which Melanie sees her face reflected—instead, it ends on them looking at one another face to face in a mutual recognition which they required from one another, and also an admission of their own

flesh-and-blood nature; their vulnerability to, and subjection to, violence, comes to unite Finn and Melanie in a shared understanding.

Ultimately Melanie rejects the passive role set for her and, through a rebellion in which Finn also rejects his prescriptive role as a puppeteer, the pair of them refuse to repeat, reproduce, and uphold the patriarchal structure, instead taking the radical path that Virginia Woolf describes in *Three Guineas*—burning the entire patriarchal house to the ground and dancing around the flames in which the repressive, exclusionary signified and signifier burn away. Furthermore, the end of the novel shows the inherent artifice of Uncle Philip's power of transmutation. The dry, dead wood of his puppet theatre goes up in flames—as the flames that burned up the pinned photograph of the bride trapped under glass—but the fire leaves the wet outdoor space of the garden untouched. The garden, as in Melanie's initial escape from her home into the night, is the place where artifice and representation may be stripped back. While Philip's power is ultimately shown to be as fragile as it is sterile, Finn and Melanie's transformation remains, as they face each other in a "wild surmise" that engenders a positive, equal relationship between them, where "we can only be like ourselves and one another" (199-200). They have moved to a new place outside of cyclical violence, with as much danger as potential, that same "demolition site" of the 1960's. And this surmise is the answer to a question Melanie posed just after the swan's destruction: "What will happen?" Melanie asks—Finn can, as then and in the garden, "Only surmise" (174).

Woolf & Carter: An Alternate Praxis

Woolf "associates Empire making, war making, and gender relations in a typical constellation" (Phillips, vii). *Jacob's Room* begins by grappling with the problem of inheritance and *Mrs. Dalloway* solidifies this as an element of mimeticism—the mechanism by which the inherently self-destructive patriarchy reproduces itself. Destructive, fatal consequences for both men and women, precludes meaningful connections between men and women. But the answer is not a wholesale rejection of the past, but rather a rearticulation of it. As Susan Squire notes, Woolf wanted to "transcend the very habit of thinking in dualities, and to criticize a society based up on such habitual polarization" (93). Categories such as male and female, combatant and civilian, active and passive, living and dead blur inexorably within the text. But this crisis of distinctions need not be the precipitation of a cataclysmic event of violence to reestablish them. Rather, this understanding of connectedness might be able to transcend these boundaries to form a new, more cohesive, more transgressive

understanding of the self and the other. Though charged with enacting this same replicative structure of patriarchal creativity, Carter's engagement with these forms allows a depth of critique that shows the inherent contradictions and artifices of mimesis as a model for relationships between subjects. In both *Shadow Dance* and *The Magic Toyshop*, Carter shows the means by which violence can erupt and create conditions for escalating acts of interpersonal violence to which women are subject as surrogates for men's violent desires. But instead of Emily being left on an abandoned street, pregnant and impoverished, Melanie shares a mutual understanding with Finn which stems from a shared experience with, and vulnerability to, violence.

Melanie and Clarissa both experience their subjectivity as a series of predetermined fragments of highly mimetic images; they see themselves as others see them rather than being able to recognise and encounter their own desire and sense of self. Through their respective novels, Woolf and Carter both see a potential for change and recognition which might transform both subjects; it is a potential that is necessary to restore humanity not just to those denied humanity, but to those who have been inhumane. The concept of 'love' as an interpersonal feeling—removed from mimetic desire and possession—comes to create intersubjective relationships based on mutual loss and recognition. But both novels uncritically portray an exposure to actual violence as necessary to understanding the other; that, paradoxically though it may appear, it is through trauma and brutalisation that an intersubjective, relational understanding may occur. There is, as well, a desire in *The Magic Toyshop* to escape completely from the past and from parental figures rather than rearticulate and reimagine them on more equitable terms (186, 189). And while Abel describes Clarissa as "interpreting Septimus's suicide in her private language of passion and integrity" and "using the shock of death to prove and resolve her relation to her past", she is able "at last to both admit and to renounce [the past's] hold" (Abel, 38-9). Clarissa's personal revelation is unable to colour her relationships with Peter or Sally, and she interiorises her understanding in a way that allows the processes to continue. While both authors have taken their depiction and critique of mimetic desire to a greater understanding and a greater breadth in these two novels, it is only in their later work that they come to an alternate mode of comprehending and articulating the past that can allow new understandings between characters and a new means by which the subject can form itself in relation to the other.

It is useless to discuss Jacob without his "room", i.e., the social framework that guides his development as the child of a widowed mother to his inevitable death in the Great War. Likewise, it is useless to discuss Clarissa without Mrs. Dalloway, the social framework that

produces a a middle-class woman throwing middle-class parties. Clarissa, however, cannot exist without the presence of an essence, a "treasure", which she wishes to preserve against both middle-class parties and the excesses of state violence that produce them. Each character is necessarily a product of the social field in which they act. The systemic violence of empire is one driven by an enthusiastic apparatus of people from Peter to Jacob to Clarissa to Septimus Smith. Plunging with a treasure—or lying in a narrow bed holding a treasure—might feel like a type of resistance, might create a network of sympathy that might form an inarticulable "no" to existing structures, but as Woolf's shift—from economic independence and a room of one's own to broad and organised antifascist politics—shows, withdrawing into one's room does little to stem the tide of patriarchal forces. Similarly, while Melanie and Finn are left glancing at one another in their wild surmise, they do so from the remains of previous systems of control; there is nothing connecting them to their history and so nothing that keeps them from repeating these same structures. At the close of each sacrificial crisis, men and women are left with the choice to pick up the pieces and reconstruct the systems, or to create new methods of communication and of life. Woolf and Carter depict the various ways by which mourning and authentic response can potentially create networks across previously unbridgeable hierarchies of meaning and value. But to move forward from a personal, individual understanding and connection towards a wider social critique and community, both authors broaden the scope of their fiction and the presentation of new connections to the past.

Chapter Three: Mothers and Mimesis in *To The Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977)

As a critical tool for examining the social relationships formed through desire and the means by which hierarchical culture is maintained and enforced, Girard's mimetic theory and scapegoat mechanism is surprisingly rarely used to examine the familial relationships formed under heteropatriarchy. While the preceding analyses of Woolf and Carter's earlier texts do feature family structures and the kinship configurations allowed within a masculine hierarchical culture, I have hitherto focused more on the conditions under which male/female relationships are reproduced. As part of a critical investigation into gender in Girard's paradigm, we must turn now to the conceptualisations of motherhood and the role of the daughter in Woolf and Carter's texts, and the gendered ways in which inheritance is experienced by women within the terms of Girard's mimetic paradigm.

As I have examined in my earlier chapters, women's place within mimetic desire is both integral and marginal to the reproduction and resuscitation of sacrificial culture. Both Woolf and Carter have interrogated the family and the mother/father relationship within their texts as the site of the replication of patriarchal values. Similarly, these two women writers are preoccupied with the family as the site of cultural reproduction and sexual trauma. As a methodology which examines the hierarchical boundaries enforced by institutional violence as well as the exclusory methods by which these boundaries are maintained and reproduced, Girard's thesis of mimetic desire is useful for examining the familial structure on which modern culture is built. Feminist criticism has returned time and again to examine the family as a base for and microcosm of structural misogynist violence; Woolf and Carter both navigate these family structures within their texts in order to expose the gendered violence inherent to them.

Girard's thesis of mimetic desire and the foundational act of violence is in part a critique of Freud's analysis of the family and culture and the primary conceits of psychoanalytic discourse. Girard's attempt to understand Freud became a cornerstone of his own work (Kirwan, 58); Freud was, in essence, Girard's model for understanding the practices of ritual and religion in the formation of culture (Adams & Girard, 12). But their divergence on this subject needs explication; fundamentally, Girard critiqued what he viewed as Freud's misapprehension of both the origins of culture and the methods by which desire is

formulated in the subject. While Girard agrees that the foundation of civilisation began with an act of murder, he contends that this murder was not an act of patricide but rather the murder of a scapegoat by a mob in order to solidify community boundaries. Similarly, Girard does not see desire as an innate quality; Freud's theses are, in Girard's understanding, too autonomous and individualistic (more rooted in biology than culture) and cannot account for the social mechanisms by which desire is transmitted and enforced. In short, Girard's formulation diverges from Freud in that desire is conceptualised not in response to the object, but rather in response to the other.

As such, the Oedipus complex is examined thoroughly in Girard's work, and is reconfigured in the light of the mimetic process in order to redefine and readdress what he views as Freud's misapprehension; while Freud contends that violence is caused by an instinctual aggression towards parental figures and by innate, unconscious libidinal processes, Girard instead articulates how this violence is produced through the force of the mimetic, and therefore the relationship with the parental figures is no less coloured by mimetic desire than any other kind of relationship model. In Girard's words: "The mimetic process detaches desire from any predetermined object, whereas the Oedipus complex fixes desire on the maternal object. The mimetic concept eliminates all conscious knowledge of patricide-incest, and even all desire for it as such; the Freudian proposition, by contrast, is based entirely on a consciousness of this desire" (*Violence and The Sacred,* 180). Or, in Golsan's paraphrase: "The child's desire for the mother is not his initial desire but simply an *imitation* of the father's desire for the mother" (22). Ontological lack of the mother as a sexual object is created only in response to a perceived ontological plenitude which the father possesses; the mother is not, in and of itself, a desirable object. As Tina Beattie explains in *New Catholic Feminism*, Girard articulates how "Freud failed to explore the implications of his early insight that the child's desire for the mother was initially motivated by its desire to imitate the father. The primary factor in awakening desire, therefore, is not the object of sexual or libidinal desire, but the desire of the esteemed or revered other" (201).

But even the most basic employment of a critical feminist lens will immediately locate the contentious androcentrism of both Girard and Freud's line of thinking. As explicated in previous chapters, women's experience with mimetic rivalry is radically different and must be examined as such. Therefore the role of the mother within this paradigm must be critically evaluated not just as an object of rivalry or as a social relation within triangular desire, but as an ontological position within mimetic desire which is necessary for its continued mediation. Furthermore, the estimation or reverence which Beattie identifies and which psychoanalysis

locates in the maternal body may be investigated using Girard's hermeneutics in order to demystify and reveal the inner workings of the heavily ritualized site and excesses of "mother".

There is a wealth of critical analysis of the mother within psychoanalytic theory, much of which is contemporaneous with the gendered discourse of the late 20th century and which can provide the means to complicate and nuance the terms of Girard's mimeticism. In particular, Luce Irigaray's writing sought to supply a female-centred critique of Freud and Lacan in *Speculum de l'autre femme* (1974) and her theories surrounding feminine subjectivity might usefully offer a means of gendering Girard's theories of mimetic desire.

Indeed, Irigaray's general critique of patriarchal culture and the process by which this is transmitted and upheld effectively provides a feminist rereading of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism. In 'When Our Lips Speak Together', Irigaray describes how women's "vital energies are spent in this wearisome labor of doubling and miming. We have been destined to reproduce—that sameness in which, for centuries, we have been the other" (71). But her explication of matricide is best and most eloquently found in 'Veiled Lips', the second essay of a trilogy published in the 1980s which investigates women's language in and through Nietzsche's philosophies. Through a reading of the *Orestia,* Irigaray outlines the role of matricide in the production of culture. In a movement from retaliatory violence towards a judicial system, Orestes is spared the consequences of murdering his own mother at the judgement of Athena, whose birth from Zeus's head demonstrates both a basic disconnection from the maternal and a reproduction of patriarchal systems. By this, femininity "appeases anger, calls for the forgetting of bloodshed, lulls vengeance with her eloquence, promises tokens of esteem, donors, a cult, rites, sacrifices, a religious silence" so long as the mother's murder is forgotten ('Veiled Lips', 99). It is a "sacrifice which is necessary to maintain the order of the hearths" (101), the originating murder which makes culture possible. Furthermore, the essay touches on women's role as re-producer of the mimetic process, where femininity is described as "an indispensable intermediary for the father in making his law prevail", and "the secret of the production of sophism" (Veiled Lips, 98). This dissimulation, as Irigaray calls it, is a veiling of women which reflects men's desires as much as it obscures women's subjectivity. This reading of women within culture overlaps with my own reading of Woolf and Carter's explication of women within the mimetic process.

As such, Irigaray holds, alongside Girard, that Freud's assumption of patricide in *Totem and Taboo* is ultimately obscurant of an earlier pre-totemic ritual murder—but where Girard sees collective murder of an arbitrary scapegoat, Irigaray sees matricide. While Girard

criticises Freud's failure to draw wider conclusions from his understanding of a foundational murder, Irigaray criticises Freud failure to step forward on the gendered nature of that murder—namely, the murder of the mother. As she writes in 'The bodily encounter with the mother': "When Freud describes and theorises, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, the murder of the father as founding the primal horde, he forgets a more archaic murder, that of the mother, necessitated by the establishment of a certain order in the polis" (*Irigaray Reader*, 36). Matricide, one of the cornerstones of patriarchal dominance, is one of the preoccupations of the work of late 20th century feminist writing on psychoanalysis. Martha Reinke reads Girard in concert with Belgian feminist and cultural critic Julia Kristeva to uncover what Girard overlooks; as Reinke explains: "The one who Girard has said is barred from language, whose murder language conceals and ritual represents, is the mother whom Kristeva has said patriarchy denies: our linguistic and cultural codes are structured around the murder of the mother" (Reinke, 69). Matricide, in Irigaray and Kristeva's understanding, is the systematic exclusion of the mother and the denial of her role, both actual and symbolic, in the production and shaping of everything from culture to children. Matricide appropriates the mother's body while denying her subjectivity and ultimately the mother's capacities are appropriated in the service of masculine projects.

This is achieved, Irigaray contends, through the disruption of the mother-daughter relationship: the daughter may only relate to the mother as either an engulfing, destructive force or a non-entity. Therefore, in Irigaray's terms, the mother-daughter relationship must be "rehabilitated" in order to reconstitute the dead mother and grant her subjectivity. Women's entrance as subjects in the symbolic order may only come about when the relationship between 'woman' and 'mother' (and 'mother' and 'daughter') is made distinct and articulated—separate, but maintaining a relational connection that neither supersedes nor subsumes, that does not trigger the mimetic double bind which prefigures the sacrificial crisis. This is women's genealogy; this is the method of interpersonal relation that must be established if we are to avoid the necessity of violence to re-establish a hierarchical culture which ultimately only demands more violence.

But Irigaray's solution—to connect back to pre-Oedipal mythic goddesses—is contentious. As Amber Jacobs notes in her investigations into Irigaray's writings on myth, matricide, and the mother, these feminine archetypes are projections of the masculine Imaginary:

> It is not enough to go back to myth and to describe and promote the apparently once-harmonious mother-daughter relation before the patriarchal order effected its violent obliteration. In my argument,

> myth is not being used for the purpose of looking back to an imaginary and utopian 'before' but instead is being used as a way of creating a future that does not yet exist. (Jacobs, 137)

Furthermore, as Griselda Pollock and Rachel Bowlby argue, Irigaray stumbles by refusing to work *beyond* the Oedipal model that in her view, erases women.[15] Laura Green points out that Irigaray's solution is backwards—we cannot rehabilitate a relationship to the mother before reconstituting the mother's subjectivity ("Myths…"). To do so would only result in a connection to a subsumptive masculine fantasy rather than a true maternal subjectivity. This has echoes of Monique Plaza's 1978 critique of Irigaray's work, which is predicated on a perception of its dangerous biological essentialism which has subjugated women for centuries; furthermore, Plaza dismisses Irigaray for not acknowledging the violence by which masculine and feminine identities are imprinted on human bodies—Irigaray's theories treat women as passive automata which reproduce these structures and have no agency in the oppressive models in which they toil, instead finding interior resistance which has no outward social referent ("Phallomorphic Power"). Similarly, Michèle Barrett describes how "it is within the family that masculine and feminine people are constructed and it is through the family that the categories of gender are reproduced" (77). There is no womanhood and indeed no motherhood outside of the social familial structure in which these categories are produced. It follows, then, that the family must be rearticulated and reconstructed in order for new ideologies, subjectivities, and relationships to form. But, quoting *Three Guineas*, Barrett notes that a Marxist feminist analysis does not necessarily construct a wider critique of the public life under which women labour at a macrocosmic level (Barrett, 79). Womanhood—and, by extension, motherhood—is constructed to be contained with masculine parameters and veiled to serve masculine interests and culture. It must be critically examined before it can be subverted. As Carter writes: "that women are consolation is a man's dream" (*Passion of New Eve*, 60); as such, we are not to look to Mother for this consolation. Therefore, the mother becomes 'mythic' in the manner of Girard's understanding—a heavily ritualised role which is meant to obscure the sacrificial nature of the community and the original victim of what is now symbolic violence. We must examine the means by which women engage with this process—to do this, we will turn again to Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter.

As I have explored, both *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway* uncover and interrogate the enmeshed natures of nationalism, ritual, and sacrifice, as both Jacob Flanders and Septimus

[15] See Pollock 'Beyond Oedipus', and Bowlby 'The Cronus Complex', both in *Laughing with Medusa* (2006).

Smith are sacrificed for the sake of British society. Woolf's feelings of inevitability regarding these structures are evident, but that does not diminish the tragic nature of this process. Moving forward through Woolf's work, therefore, we need to give further shape to the role of violence and mimesis in her writings . We must turn again to the concept of inheritance explored in the earlier reading of *Jacob's Room*. *A Room of One's Own* of course explicitly delineated the difficulties women have had in writing their experiences and finding their own creative voice. It asks how women can overcome the "spasm of pain" which thwarts a writer's mind to "alter its clear vision", how to avoid the "the flaw in the centre" (95-6) which threatens to rot not only her creation but also her mind and body. While a large portion of the essay addresses the concerns women have faced in their collective impoverishment and their inability to maintain a space for themselves, the rest of the piece concerns itself with women's creative genealogy. The legacy the narrator's fictitious aunt leaves her is not just financial—it is a creative freedom, which "unveiled the sky" (50). Woolf is acutely aware of the erasure of women from history and the ways in which men have forced them into roles which perpetuated masculine desire, culture, and pursuits. In *To the Lighthouse,* she further makes a comparison between the rupture of the war and the rupture of women's relationship with their mothers, and can be seen to preempt Irigaray's concern with matricide as the patriarchal condition.

Similarly, if we turn to Carter's work, as Susanne Gruss notes in *The Pleasure of the Feminist Text*: "Carter seems to execute matricide *for* her protagonists by eliminating their mothers prematurely" (119). As examined in *The Magic Toyshop* and in Melanie's movement through the patriarchal household, the mother becomes a site of ambivalence and fear, and the death of Melanie's mother can be read as an escape from, in Gina Wisker's words, "the middle-class mould offered by her decidedly stereotypical mother", (195) while Aunt Margaret's lack of language and lack of flesh—mute and skeletal—offer little for Melanie's sense of self and future. Even Carter's earliest text, *Shadow Dance*, has Emily escape her father's house where she would be destined to embody her mother's Catholic values and subservience—only to be placed there again by Honeybuzzard's negligence. Similarly Edna places herself firmly into a maternal role, where even her sexual relationship with Henry Glass is construed as a kind of compassionate care-taking. Meanwhile *The Passion of New Eve*, described by Marleen Barr as a "feminist fabulation"—one which "exposes, subverts, and rewrites a patriarchal myth", (Barr, xii) like Carter's earlier texts, reproduces the familial structure in order to transgress it. However, here, Carter moves her critical investigation forward by interrogating the role of the mother in a way her previous texts do not.

The mother, in both Woolf and Carter's fiction, is the site on which the excesses of masculine control are played out, processed, and perpetuated, and the mother's struggle is, ultimately, laid in the daughter's lap. And this is the struggle that Woolf and Carter—and all women—face economically, culturally, and creatively within a patriarchal, mimetic culture. The process of becoming-woman, and the understanding of women's place within the masculine monoculture which hinges on the management and occasional proliferation of mimetic desire, are synonymous with the processes of becoming-mother. *To the Lighthouse* and *The Passion of New Eve*, while enormously different in scope, scale, subject, and form, both manage to describe and critique this process of becoming-mother which sacrificial culture demands of women. The role of motherhood as both integral and marginal to culture is highlighted in the literal and figurative reproduction of that culture as well as the process by which this transformation into motherhood takes place. Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* show how these same questions emerge; both interrogate, in Carter's words, "the cultural production of femininity" (Haffenden, 86) and the ritual violence inherent in this production. There is the same disenchantment with masculine culture, whose chief crime has been to obscure women's self-articulation, and has forced itself between women so as to disrupt their own sense of continuity, contiguity, and unique literary history, with fatal results for women's creative capacity and for culture as a whole. But alongside this is the deep antipathy towards the mythic quality of the mother. This haunting, spectral presence is touched upon in Rebecca Munford's investigation into the gothic maternal in Carter's work, which describes gothic fiction turning "again and again to the image of the dead mother's body" (Munford, 154) in order to look for her. Both *The Passion of New Eve* and *To the Lighthouse* struggle with this concept, and with the characters' relation to mothers and motherhood.

Woolf and Carter's texts are both severely critical of the Oedipal model of social relations and both *To the Lighthouse* and *The Passion of New Eve* reconstruct the scene in order to critique it. Furthermore, these novels are overtly and very deeply sceptical of an Oedipal model of social relations, which delineates an antipathetic relationship with a mythic, dangerous mother who seeks to engulf and annihilate the child, but whose infinite allure means the child is never far from her grasp. They do so predominantly by drawing and rearticulating the relationship with the mother; reviving her, revisiting her, and eventually reestablishing a relational mode with the mother that neither necessitates her psychic death nor demands the daughter assume her place in relation to the father. Drawing on the analysis present in both authors' earlier works, Woolf and Carter revise their politics in *To The*

Lighthouse and *The Passion of New Eve* in order to critically investigate the role of the family in the production of patriarchal values. Furthermore, both Woolf and Carter are deeply sceptical of the type of separatism that is implicitly—or, in the case of Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères*, explicitly—described by late 20th century French feminist writing. Irigaray's inherent binarism is a useful theoretical tool, but ultimately cannot be used to describe or even imagine relations between the sexes that are not both circumscribed and divided by an unimpregnable difference. An alternate mode of being, an alternate society that is single-sexed is not, in either Woolf or Carter's politics, one that is fundamentally different from the patriarchal constructions under which they already labour.

But most prominent is the struggle the focalising characters —Evelyn/Eve and Lily Briscoe— have with the process of becoming-mother. Both characters are formulated as prodigal daughters who, through their experiences of mimesis and mimetic violence, come to accept a relationship with the maternal which suggests a powerful sense of resuscitative kinship rather than the reproduction of masculine culture. Both Eve/Evelyn and Lily Briscoe are confronted by the excesses and the sacrifices of mimetic desire, and both are marginalised figures with a deep ambivalence towards the structures and hierarchies which they are expected uncritically to reproduce. Despite this, these characters manage to find a way to reconstruct their own subjectivity extant of the masculine image of the mother which allows them to form intersubjective relationships with the other. As with both authors' previous texts, the alienation which these characters experience is due to the boundaries enforced by a sacrificial culture; however, *To The Lighthouse* and *The Passion of New Eve* come to a new sense of subjectivity through a reconfiguration of the mother's role, one which suggests a disruption of the Oedipal model and a repudiation of the scapegoat mechanism upon which mimetic culture rests.

To The Lighthouse (1927)

To The Lighthouse (1927) recounts two family holidays, years apart; in the first, the family is whole, surrounded by friends and sycophants, but in the second, the family has been irrevocably changed by the death of the mother. Lily Briscoe, an artist struggling to paint a scene from the family household, struggles with her ambivalent relationship with Mrs. Ramsay and her antagonistic relationship with Mr. Ramsay. The novel moves through several key scenes of mimetic desire as experienced by women and demonstrates the place women

occupy within them, then moves towards a critique of this static set of relationships which undermine and prove fatal to women's understanding of themselves as subjects.

As we have seen, Woolf's fiction is filled with the difficulties of inheritance; as with the men in *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, these female characters enter into and are expected to uphold the society that threatens to subsume and destroy them. How they are expected to do so and how they are expected to be sacrificed is distinctly gendered in Woolf's work. I will look at how this is situated in *To The Lighthouse* and *A Room of One's Own*, the latter of which shifts the focus from men's inheritance and sacrifice to focus instead the role of the daughter. This theme is explored somewhat in Woolf's earlier texts, though never brought to a satisfactory political conclusion; in *The Voyage Out*, Rachel Vinrace chafes against the strictures of Victorian womanhood and ultimately dies instead of marrying into the middle-class role of wife and mother. In *Night and Day*, Katharine Hilbery stares down the imposing portrait of her famous grandfather; her life and her mother's life have been pledged to maintaining his memory. The theme is also succinctly introduced in Woolf's short story 'A Society', published in the collection *Monday or Tuesday* in 1921. The pun in the title is plain; it refers to both British society which she satirises and the Society for Asking Questions which the women in the text eventually form, asking one particular question: "Why […] if men write such rubbish as this, should our mothers have wasted their youth in bringing them into the world?" (9).

If men's history is "untrue", men's poetry just "verbose, sentimental foolery", and men's books "unutterably bad", what is the purpose of women bearing children, if the world men have made is already filled with their bad art? Why continue a society that only seems to perpetuate masculine culture? So they make a pact: "Before we bring another child into the world we must swear that we will find out what the world is like." And so a new society—one made to examine and judge men's society rather than simply praise it—is formed (8-10). The women set forth to join the various branches of public life—the university, the courts of law, the military—and try to determine the answer to this question. They briefly—and a little unsuccessfully—put their role as the bearers of men's children on hold as they infiltrate public life. But when they reconvene to make their judgment on whether or not men's society is worth continuing, the men in the streets declare war. The text is interrupted, and the society abandoned. War—the result of men's society—has made the women's judgement for them.

'A Society' shows us the product of women's isolation from public life: men's society runs unchecked, and their children—whom they bore proudly and voluminously but "in ignorance" like their mothers before them—are killed in war. In the closing scene of the

story, two members of the society look upon a remaining child, a daughter, who obliviously plays with her toys. The two women sweep up the papers of the society's last meeting and "solemnly made her a present of the lot and told her we had chosen her to be President of the Society of the future—upon which she burst into tears, poor little girl" (28). The work unfinished and interrupted by the war, the women and their female child are left behind to piece together the society that destroyed itself: the anxiety of inheritance is present even here. That this inheritance is of specific political and artistic importance is key: this desire to engage with culture and shape it can only come from a history of women working towards this goal. As Woolf asks in 'A Society', why should our mothers have wasted their youth when male society produces neither good people nor good books? *A Room of One's Own* and *To the Lighthouse* both return to this question of good books and good motherhood years later, examining the cultural inheritance of the daughter in relation to both the Oedipal system and the mimetic process.

But the answer to this is not, as might be argued by critics linking Woolf to Jane Ellen Harrison, feminine lack of self or feminine unity—no matter how much we might desire it.[16] According to *To The Lighthouse,* the only way to reach the mother is, essentially, to reconstruct her; like Jacob in *Jacob's Room* we are first given pieces of understanding about Mrs. Ramsay through the eyes and feelings of other characters. Mrs. Ramsay herself comes to us only in very brief but brilliant flashes, like the sweep of the lighthouse beam—her subjectivity is something experienced as bright and yearning, but broken up by long stretches of darkness. As of yet, we cannot reach the lighthouse, just as we cannot reach Mrs. Ramsay.

Jane Ellen Harrison

And the past is present throughout Woolf's work: ghosts haunt nearly all of Woolf's texts; it would be remiss to mention here the Angel in the House of 'Professions for Women' and the Great Poet of *A Room of One's Own* without mentioning the ghost of Mrs. Ramsay that appears at the end of *To The Lighthouse*, or the painted, fading spectre of the dead mother, Mrs. Pargiter that hangs above the mantle throughout most of *The Years*. Even the previously mentioned Katharine Hilbery experiences the ghost of her grandfather as she gives tours of his relics to curious admirers. Past, present, and future are presented side-by-side to

[16] See Carpentier, Martha C. *Ritual, Myth, and the Modernist Text*. Vol 12. Library of Anthropology Series. Amsterdam, NL: Gordon and Breach, 1998. Carpentier argues that Woolf is attempting to form a union with a mythic mother, as the source of creativity (188). Similarly, Mills, Jean. *Virginia Woolf, Jane Ellen Harrison, and the Spirit of Modernist Classicism*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2014. Mills argues Woolf is engaged in "goddess-making" (114).

give shape and meaning to loss; as Woolf writes in *A Sketch of The Past*, the "past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper" (98). These 'ghosts' are the tangible effect that the past has on the present—and alongside the ghost of Julia Stephen there is another ghost, conspicuous in *A Room of One's Own*, but less often remarked, of Jane Ellen Harrison whose absence/presence is peculiarly germane to the argument presented here.

For critics such as Jean Mills, Harrison's influence on Woolf cannot be stressed enough. For what they emphatically share are epistemological goals in their common critique of "heroic society"—a contradiction in terms, according to Harrison, and the source of the self-destructive patriotism that drove forward British imperial life. These "fossil virtues" (138-9) as Harrison calls them are a severe detriment to modern life—virtues which arise from a desire for masculine "virility" and "insularity" which marginalise women and enforce a self-destructive society (127-9). Harrison's work has been noted as almost Kristevan in its desire to "rejoin the mother" (Marcus, *Languages of Patriarchy*, 7) with a communal sense of belonging. While in the wake of WWI men "reached for a reaffirmation of masculine hierarchies in mythic structures", Woolf found these models to be egotistical and patriarchal, as "the ego of the author thwarts and destroys the story" (Mills, 64-5).

Mills posits that Woolf was drawn to these feminine figures from Harrison's work for "sources for a model that is more suggestive of the vitality and sexual vitality, the regeneration, rebirth, and sensuality posited by Jane Harrison's research read as feminist". She can engender counter-narratives which would give alternate modes of relational connection with the present and the past, to construct a future in which men would not face heroic sacrifice and women would not face private subsumation (54). Harrison's works, like Woolf's, "refuse to give us heroes, and often point instead to the consequences of a society based upon the glorification of the individual in service to a patriarchal and imperialistic ideal" (78). But Mills' reading, like Martha Carpentier's and Shelly Arlen's, proposes Woolf was attempting an uncritical merging with the mother which ignores the ambivalence running throughout her works. While Woolf's search for mothers involved a legacy not just of Aphra Behn and Charlotte Brontë, but Jane Ellen Harrison and Julia Stephen, Woolf must connect to these women without resorting to mythic constructions or destructive mimesis. This is a key

question in Woolf's texts, one whose answer would also address "how do we produce good people and good books", women being uniquely suited to do both simultaneously.

Motherhood and Authorship

Motherhood becomes a central theme in Woolf's later work, both as a socially constituted figure as well as an image of feminine creation.As Susan Squier notes in *Virginia Woolf and London*, "the death of Julia Stephen had a pivotal impact upon an issue central to *A Room of One's Own*: female authorship" (19). Woolf recognises the need for mothers in a culture that routinely erases them from history; women's genealogy is essential to their artistic lineage. "For masterpieces are not single and solitary births", she writes, "they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice" (*A Room of One's Own*, 26). There can be no Shakespeare without Marlowe or Chaucer, so too there can be no Woolf without the Brontës, Austen, Eliot, or Aphra Behn, for "they wrote as women write, not as men write", something Woolf would go on to explore more fully years later in *Three Guineas*.

This distinction is, for Woolf, vital; women have been used to uphold the masculine monoculture that would shut out difference—a difference Woolf links to creative authenticity and the multiplicity of human expression, which has hitherto been excluded from culture to its ineffable detriment. She is against what Irigaray terms the masculine "mastery" in the production of meaning; the reader, Woolf, the three (or four) Marys in the text are engaging in what Margaret Whitford (23) would describe as a "creative dialogue"—there is not what Irigaray terms a "guarantor of an independent truth", (*Speculum*, 12) or what Woolf called "a nugget of pure truth" that we may fold up in our notebooks and display on a shelf—truth devoid of experience or praxis. For Woolf and Irigaray, intellectual mastery is part and parcel of patriarchal control—when researching 'Woman' at the library in *A Room of One's Own*, she finds nothing but books written by angry men.

Woolf then makes a point about women's relationships with other women—how their depth, gravity, and importance has hitherto been excluded from culture entirely. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf is speaking, as Jane Marcus notes in 'The Proper Upkeep of Names', as "a woman among women" (4). To explore these relations is finally to "light a torch in that vast chamber" where it "is all half lights and profound shadows, like those serpentine caves". Exploring those dark caves that precede us is the object not just of feminist literature—even Elizabeth Abel identifies Woolf's aim as an attempt to connect with "a female precursor", (3)

an epistemological destination Abel links with psychoanalysis. Similarly against the narrative of parthenogenic modernism mentioned earlier, Maren Tova Linett's collection *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* specifically writes against this creation myth of modernism, placing Woolf among a community of women writers. The desire to "envision an expansive, truthful art" required "expansive true portraits of women's consciousness" and therefore a revolution in "literary art" (14). Elisabeth Bronfen also discusses in *Over Her Dead Body* the ways that women writers react to, interpret, and deconstruct the cultural linkage of femininity with death. She finds fruitful discourse in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* with its image of Judith Shakespeare, for:

> Woolf's is a double dialogue, for the apostrophe to a dead, absent woman is simultaneously addressed to a community of women listeners who are implicitly present and whose function is precisely to actualise the absent but potential feminine voice. Woolf's model also grounds writing in the death of a woman, yet the paradox that emerges in her anecdote is that, having inspired the writing of other women, the dead woman poet as muse will come into being again, for the first time. (398)

Like Septimus, the Great Female Poet's ignominious suicide has a tangible, ghostlike effect on the present. But unlike Septimus, the Great Female Poet might one day return in the form she deserves. According to Johnsen, Woolf "affirms her solidarity" with her antecedents, acknowledging their struggles as explicitly against patriarchy: "Woolf's anonymous history records their sacrifices so that they need not be repeated" (Johnsen, 119-20). Through this chapter I seek to demonstrate Woolf's initial response in the face of empire, in which resistance against tyranny is seen as futile or even impossible to maintain, and thus death reigns—with or without a "treasure" of an inner self preserved.[17]

Critic Tillie Olsen reads *Room* as an "elegy" for women artists forgotten by history, while *To The Lighthouse* is described as the process by which Woolf "laid to rest" her parents. Woolf's use of Lily Briscoe as a self-informed avatar for feminine creativity has us witness what is eventually a successful attempt, through the interregnum of the war and in its aftermath, to create a feminine genealogy which has been until this point inaccessible, and how only through the most obvious manifestation of the patriarchy's self-destructive tendencies that this became possible. The mechanism underpinning cyclical violence and its link to the denigration of women has been peeled back, and Woolf, in her work, makes this link plain through this elegy—what is an elegy but a way of remembering the past? But if *To The Lighthouse* is truly elegaic, it mourns something that had been lost long before the text

[17] My next chapter will examine the shift away from this stagnant politics, with the turning point present in her 1929 *A Room of One's Own*, while its initial premise hinges on the interiority of an inner, private space, it comes to acknowledge relationality as a necessary component of women's nascent creative voice, which is further investigated and examined in *To The Lighthouse*.

began: like *A Room of One's Own*, it uses mourning as a connective process to establish the longed-for female genealogy shut out by patriarchal Victorianism. The conceptions of modernist "counter-mourning" will supplement the reading of violence, mimesis, and the mother. Ultimately through these texts published close together, Woolf comes to terms with her own lack of genealogy as an artist and as a woman by creating her own relational connection with the past. As William Johnsen writes in his own study of Woolf's confrontation with mimetic desire, "Consciousness emerges out of primary resistance, when being is at stake" (132).

Desire and The Oedipal Family

To The Lighthouse is focalised initially and in the final section primarily through Lily Briscoe, a visitor to the Ramsay summer holiday home, who attempts in both beginning and ending sections of the novel to paint a picture in the garden. The first passage of the novel is entitled 'The Window', and it is through the window that the first scene is observed to take place; the reader watches, alongside Lily, through the window of the house to where Mrs Ramsay sits knitting while her youngest son James cuts out printed images from the Army & Navy catalogue. This part of the text deals almost exclusively with how Mrs Ramsay is seen and perceived by the characters around her; she is depicted through the gamut of imposed conceptions of women from the Madonna with child to simply "nothing". Alongside this, Woolf's characterisation of Mr. Ramsay is one of interdictions and interruptions and constant threats. Throughout the first half of the text, he breaks in between the other characters both emotionally and textually. Bowling past Lily, he nearly knocks over her easel as he recites lines from Tennyson's 'Charge of The Light Brigade'.

Mr. Ramsay's relationship with his children is explained in genealogical terms—they "sprung from his loins" and therefore must embody and perpetuate his ideals rather than their mother's. Mrs Ramsay's "rain of energy", and "all her energies" churning into a "delicious fecundity" and "spray of life", are used by Mr. Ramsay in this way—his "fatal sterility" and "beak of brass, barren and bare" steal this from her. "Demanding sympathy" from her, Mrs. Ramsay's "capacity to surround and protect" leaves "scarcely a shell of herself for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (34-5). The "beak of brass" and "claws of steel" will also feature in *A Room of One's Own*, as the tools with which knowledge may be extracted from "all this mass of paper" which men have written about women (34). The violence returns again here too, as the author she is reading writes as though his anger makes

him "jab his pen on the paper as if he were killing some noxious insect as he wrote, but even when he had killed it that did not satisfy him, he must go on killing it" (40). As women are "spent" creatively and culturally by their appropriation by masculine culture, women are "spent" emotionally by their private relationships as well.

But James "hated him" for "interrupting them; he hated him for the exaltation and sublimity of his gestures", but foremost James hates Mr. Ramsay for "commanding them to attend to him" and disturbing "the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother" (34). As William Johnsen describes Mr. Ramsay, "he wants James to reconfirm his own sense of failure". This is what Girard describes as the "mimetic double bind"—in fostering a relationship between a model and disciple along the terms of mimetic desire, the model ends up fostering a rivalry between himself and the disciple. "The model's very first no—however softly spoken or cautiously phrased—can easily be mistaken by the disciple for an irrevocable act of excommunication, a banishment to the realms of outer darkness" (Johnsen, 130). This mimetic double bind is a traumatic encounter for the child. "The disciple feels guilty—though of what, he cannot be sure—and unworthy of the object of his desire, which now appears more alluring than ever. Desire has now been redirected towards those particular objects protected by the *other's* violence. The link between desire and violence has been forged, and in all likelihood it will never be broken" (*Girard Reader*, 232-3). Ultimately all desire is imposed, either consciously or unconsciously: unconsciously in the case of Girard's unconscious mimesis, consciously in the case of inheritance. They come to work in tandem, and both result in violence and the perpetuation of masculine culture in Woolf's texts. Mr Ramsay, and the men in this novel generally, are "locked in" in the sense Woolf meant in *A Room of One's Own*—equally as pitiable as being "locked out", men are forced to perpetuate patriarchal ideals. James resents his father, but even Mrs. Ramsay knows that one day he'll move into academia or parliament in order to support masculine culture— "James will have to write *his* dissertation one of these days" (29).

Similarly Charles Tansley, invited as one of Mr. Ramsay's acolytes, tries to emulate his intellectual idol in his thoughts and manners, as well as his desires (6). As Tansley and Mrs. Ramsay walk into town together, he is "flattered" and "soothed" by Mrs. Ramsay's attention" (10). He feels an intense desire to please her; "He would like her to see him, gowned and hooded, walking in a procession" (10). In the closing paragraphs of the passage he has a vision of Mrs. Ramsay as a mythic goddess, tending to him—"Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride; felt the wind and the cyclamen and the violets for he was walking with a beautiful woman for the first time in his life. He had hold of her bag." His desire to be

flattered, soothed, and placed in charge of Mrs. Ramsay's belongings—and to prove her wrong, as she insists she carry her own bag—mimics that of Mr. Ramsay. And the next chapter too opens with a repetition of the same pronouncement Mr. Ramsay gave forbidding the lighthouse to James—but whether the speaker is Mr. Ramsay or Tansley is not clear (13). Because, if "her husband required sacrifices (and indeed he did) she cheerfully offered up to him Charles Tansley" (15). This sacrifice is specifically coded as one of inheritance. And Mr. Ramsay storms into the text at this juncture speaking lines from Tennyson's 'Charge of The Light Brigade', bringing in that "sentimental" and "verbose foolery" of men's pre-war writing mocked in 'A Society'.

However, the masculine world is, to Mrs Ramsay, "crossed this way and that, like iron girders […] upholding the world" (98). But the iron bars are the same shape as the stuttered 'I' that Tansley asserts himself with and uses to interrupt the flow and peace of the dinner table—the same 'I' which Woolf excoriates in her letter to Ethel Smyth as erected "like another part of the body I don't dare to name",[18] or, as she writes in *A Room of One's Own*, "a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter "I". One began dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it" (149). Masculine ego, represented by the *I*, ultimately obscures rather than illuminates life, to the detriment of both men and women. While the mimetic double-bind is apparent in these passages, Girard's texts only touch on a gendered reading of mimetic desire and the sacrificial crisis—though quick to excoriate totemic desire put forward by psychoanalysts in the wake of Freud, Girard still explains mimetic desire in terms of androcentricity: the son may mimic the father in his desire of the mother rather than desire her on Oedipal terms, but the sexual paradigm which denigrates women and removes their textual agency and desire remains.

This experience, in which the mother is denigrated to a rivalry-inspiring object between father and son, is not replicated between the mother and daughter. Though Lily sits at Mrs. Ramsay's knee as James did, even while Mrs. Ramsay feels there is "scarcely a shell of herself", Lily views Mrs Ramsay as a source of unknown and archaic knowledge. Her "chambers of the mind and heart" are "treasures in the tomb of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions" that would "teach one everything". The desire for this knowledge, for this ancient, secret connection, leads her to wish to be "waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same". "For it was not knowledge but unity she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is

[18] See Woolf to Smyth, 29 July 1934, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautman, 6 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975-800) 5:319.

knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee." Lily knows that knowledge and wisdom are "stored in Mrs. Ramsay's heart. How then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were?" (47-8).

But this desire to merge with the mother is not without its own sacrifices.

The Dinner Party as Sacrificial Table

The remainder of the section tries to explore this possessive desire: 'The Window' culminates at the dinner party for which Mrs. Ramsay has been preparing for several days; all of the novel's characters come to the feast. The dinner table is described as an archaic place, and like Mrs Ramsay's "chambers of the mind and heart", it is filled with "Neptune's banquet", "with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus", possessing a type of inscrutable knowledge of pre-Oedipal unity. The ritualism of the dinner table is plain, and the community that forms over this meal prefigures the sacrifice that will unite them. For Mrs Ramsay, this world is "possessed of a great size and depth" and one she can happily explore. And while Carmichael's looking is described in destructive terms—"plunged in", "broke off a bloom", consuming the centrepiece display—"Looking together united them" (90). The dinner table, arranged and maintained by Mrs. Ramsay, is the mother's domain, one which fills Lily with dread. While earlier she wondered if "loving" could "make her and Mrs Ramsay one". Here is where 'love' is complicated, where the harmony and unity is shown to have the sacrificial quality that its inherent elision demands.

While Mr Ramsay "demanded sacrifices", here Mrs Ramsay presides over the union of Paul and Minta at the sacrificial dinner table; there is a feeling "at once freakish and tender, of celebrating a festival […] for what could be more serious than the love of man for woman, what more commanding, more impressive, bearing in its bosom the seeds of death; at the same time these lovers, these people entering into illusion glittering eyed, must be danced around with mockery, decorated with garlands" (93). Paul and Minta arrive at the same time as the celebrated dish, the Boeuf en Daube, is paraded to the table. Paul and Minta's engagement is intuited and Mrs Ramsay leads her victims, Lily feels, to the altar—but the sacrifices the two experience are not the same. "It came over her too now—the emotion, the vibration of love. […] he, bound for adventure; she, moored to the shore […] she solitary, left out—and, ready to implore a share", but when she offers to help Paul search for the brooch he simply laughs, shutting her out, while Minta is belittled by Mr Ramsay beside him (95).

Love is presented in the text, through Lily's perspective at this moment, as ultimately a sacrifice: love turns men like Paul into "a bully with a crowbar", while women "would all the time be feeling, This is not what we want; there is nothing more tedious, puerile, and inhumane than love; yet it is also beautiful and necessary" (95). Under patriarchy, love is just another tool that wedges between men and women instead of uniting them—or, rather, divests women of their desires and subjecthood so that their subsumption is inevitable. As Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own*, "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (45). However, a mirror ineffably obscures what is behind it, and takes whatever shape is required in its uncritical reflection. If woman is a mirror, then whatever selfhood she had is lost. And without this power, Woolf writes, "the glories of all our wars would be unknown" and "the Czar and the Kaiser would never have worn crowns or lost them" (46). As mirrors, women are used to support and emotionally scaffold the militarism and self-destruction of heroic/patriarchal society. Woolf states this plainly too in *A Room of One's Own*, as previously quoted: "Whatever may be their use in civilised societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action" (46).

Susan Squier, in her work 'Mirroring and Mothering' which tracks the image of the mirror across Woolf's fiction and life-writing, describes, "a satisfying mirror encounter" as "like its precursor in that shared gaze of mother and child, links self and the other; past, present, and future" (275). The mirror, the uncritical reflection, is mimesis. The "satisfying" encounter is one that connects the past to the present—specifically the mother to the daughter—without that loss of identity or distinction that mimesis inevitably entails. Marriage, the relationship of woman to man, is that unsatisfying mirror. Lily views marriage as a "dilution"—returning to the "waters" metaphor that permeated her merging with Mrs. Ramsay—and also a "degradation" as she contemplates the problem of her painting—the problem of joining one half to the next, the visual progression of past to present complicated by Mrs Ramsay's eliding unity (95).

Because, like Mr Ramsay, Mrs Ramsay thinks about her accomplishments in terms of descent and inheritance: "All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta"—they will inherit her "community of feeling with people", which is in service to "stability" which "seemed always to have been" (105). This sacrifice to stability—this selfsame goddess who reigns alongside Proportion and Conversion—will subsume the couple as much as it has subsumed Mrs Ramsay, conscripting them into roles they cannot help but mimic to uphold a system which predates them and seems unable to be meaningfully disrupted.

But, like Clarissa Dalloway's position in her respective text, we should not read Mrs. Ramsay's position as one controlled by her and her desires; she is, instead, following the feminine imperatives imposed upon her by patriarchal structures. Without this obsession with marriage, without doting on the men around her, without fashioning and refashioning her children's lives, Mrs. Ramsay feels the encroachment of the 'nothing' with which she has been filled. "Slowly it came into her head, why is it then that one wants people to marry? What was the value, the meaning of things? (Every word they said now would be true.) Do say something, she thought, wishing only to hear his voice. For the shadow, the thing folding them in was beginning, she felt, to close round her again. Say anything, she begged, looking at him, as if for help." Though she derives pleasure from her position as a unifying force, it comes with a lack of personal desire; she recognises obliquely that her power has been co-opted in service to the status quo that obliterates her. While she performs sacrifices in service to "love", she, at the same time, can't tell her husband that she loves him, as "he could say things—she never could." She is linguistically circumscribed by her position; she has no desires of her own, and therefore "she could never say what she felt" (114).

As Johnsen notes, this sacrificial love is most evident in this scene between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay; as he writes, "there is no free space where a woman can tell a man who wants to hear, of her own will, that she loves him. For Mr. Ramsay, this becomes the only thing worth having, but his desire inevitably rhymes with all the coercive commands uttered by men in general. It would be easier to indicate her love by serving him" (131). In true mimetic fashion, what Mr. Ramsay desires is exactly what he excludes himself from: mutual, uncoerced love.

Time Passes / The Lighthouse

This love from Mrs Ramsay goes unvoiced. She dies suddenly, outside the text. However, the loss is described as one Mr Ramsay experiences as he stretches his arms out and finds them empty. Her death is his loss, not her own. As with the interruption of the war in 'A Society', the world that results is irrefutably changed. The war and childbirth are intimately linked within *To The Lighthouse*; while during *Time Passes* the war crescendos and decrescendos like the battering of waves against a rock, taking away the Ramsay's eldest son, their eldest daughter Prue dies in childbirth—the son sacrificed, like Jacob, to the empire in times of war, while the daughter is sacrificed in its continuation regardless. But while the Great War affected the whole of England and Europe generally, the greatest loss the Ramsays

feel is the tearing away of their mother's presence. It is through the rupture of the war that modernism gives birth to itself—the consequence of masculine intervention which seeks to perpetuate itself with the body of the mother. Yet here, the process is disrupted; Woolf finds great potential in this break from the past, which questions the masculine culture that brought them to this point. Lily, the symbolic daughter, is left behind with the dregs of postwar society, reeling from the sacrifice it has made in its desperation to maintain itself. Like Mrs. McNab, she is made to pick up and reconstruct the pieces.

To The Lighthouse grapples with the drastic questions left by the war—the tremendous loss, the uncertainty, the abandonment felt by an entire generation—and posits, as best it can, how the interpersonal relations created by masculine domination and intervention lead to the inevitable dramatic upheaval both in public and private life, and that the masculine world had, ultimately, failed them utterly. Woolf and the modernists were left to write, as Lecia Rosenthal explains in *Mourning Modernism*, what "remained" after the war. *To The Lighthouse*'s final section, 'The Lighthouse', depicts the detritus of a people who have lived through an apocalyptic event. To read the novel alongside Girard, as William Johnsen does in *Violence and Modernism*, the novel ends with the "children" still left alive after the war—Lily, James, and Cam—"coexisting with their parents as equals" rather than committing to them as "rivals" (133).

While Jean Moorcroft Wilson's *Virginia Woolf's War Trilogy* sees the war being portrayed negatively in *Mrs Dalloway* and *Jacob's Room*, thematically it moves to a more ambivalent note in *To The Lighthouse*; it is also renewal, not simply destruction (12). Like the sacred violence of the sacrificial crisis, the Great War was meant to be the final act of violence that would, from that point, end violence altogether. In 'Time Passes' there is the frightening dissolution of difference that prefigures the sacrificial crisis: "Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say "This is he" or "This is she."" (120). It is the point at which society must either radically change or reassert itself as it was—and this is the point in which mourning and counter-mourning become the contention with which Woolf grapples. "[T]his was tragedy—not palls, dust, and the shroud; but children coerced, their spirits subdued" (142). The tragedy of death is not death itself, but the subsumptive force the past may exert on the present, returning it to the point that created the conditions of its self-destruction—the tragedy of mimetic inheritance. Woolf was attempting to recast this self-destruction of the patriarchal order as one of intense possibility for those living in its margins, where the mother's subjectivity,

heretofore obscured, might finally come through, and mourning might be refigured as continuous and connective rather than a means to abandon both memory and feeling.

James and Cam, Son and Daughter

To return to William Johnsen's reading, he recognises that the Oedipal structure and mimetic rivalry introduced between James and his father is resolved by the novel's close: “For James his father is the *tyrannos* whose violent traditions must be fought everywhere they occur. […] If we learn how to struggle as Woolf does, then, correspondingly, what we might win is another kind of internalised father, the living memory of a loving father, also (potentially) everywhere. If the father’s violence is a foundational cultural influence because it comes necessarily before the child’s, so did the father’s love” (134).

While as a child James directed his hatred towards his father, as an adult he recognizes "it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him—without his knowing, perhaps: that fierce sudden black-winged harpy, with its talons and its beak all cold and hard, that struck and struck at you" (175). This beak, the "beak of brass", is something he recognises as not inherent to the "old man" of his father, but a possession that grips them both. "He would track down and stamp out—tyranny, despotism, he called it—making people do what they did not want to do" (175). But Cam, the daughter, urges James to "look" (181)—specifically, to recognise their father rather than mimic his intrusion.

While Johnsen describes the way Cam and James recover the father from the excesses of tyrannical patriarchy that would pit them against him and seek to overthrow him, however, I will focus on Lily’s relationship with Mrs. Ramsay and the recovery of the mother from a place of non-subjecthood.

Lily Briscoe

Here Johnsen’s analysis falls short; while he acknowledges that the novel leaves the last word to Lily, he does not explore the rearticulated relationship that Lily finds between herself and Mr Ramsay and the memory of Mrs Ramsay. Lily's evolved relationship with Mrs. Ramsay is where the thread of “counter mourning” comes to the fore; she attempts, as Bahun explains, to “combat societal petrification of memories” (18). Indeed, Woolf had a particularly intimate experience with this “societal petrification”, as her father, Leslie

Stephen, wrote, some years after Julia Stephen's death, an epistolary memoir known as the 'Mausoleum Book' in order to mourn and, eventually, set aside the loss of his wife. The mother was constructed as an "unlovable phantom" according to Woolf, which "did unpardonable mischief" and obscured "the shape of a true and most vivid mother" (*Reminiscences*, 45). Thusly, counter-mourning is an attempt to grieve without the need to create and set aside an object into which one may displace one's emotions.[19] This thread is particularly noted in Clewell's 2009 *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism*, which understands Woolf's mourning as a rearticulation of mourning practices in light of the Great War, as "a personal and social labor based on sustained rather than severed attachments to loss." The female characters articulate a "feminist refusal" to a finite mourning process, which "threatened to perpetuate in the years following 1918 the kind of prewar values that placed male combatants on the battlefield and devalued women's social roles during the period" (26-7). Adulation of the past, however irrevocably lost it has become, is ultimately a desire to return to the same conditions which brought about the mass death of the war. The sacrifice that ends the frightening undifferentiation simply returns the sacrificers to the same violent stratification that eventually dissolved and required death.

It is specifically through the medium of artistic creation that this counter-mourning is achieved and the connection to the mother forged in that same service to the present. Viewing Mrs. Ramsay is "some trick of the painter's eye", and the "sight, the phrase, had its power to console." The ghost of Mrs. Ramsay comes to Lily specifically when she is painting: "the vision would come to her, and her eyes, half closing, sought something to base her vision on." And "all had been part of the fields of death" but she is perpetually brought back to the present for "the vision must be perpetually remade" (172-3). Like the image of Jane Harrison, "the flash of some terrible reality leaping, as its way is, out of the heart of the spring," (*Room of One's Own*, 21) these ghosts come to us to shape the present; drawing from Judith Butler's work on Greek myth, Mrs Ramsay's spectral image, like Eurydice's, "does not refute the loss or, indeed, ameliorate it. It is given a strange sort of presence, but this presence does not deny the loss; it gives it its present life, it shows how it continues to contour life in the present" (Butler "Bracha's…", vii).

The grief-work which Lily undergoes enables her to identify with Mrs. Ramsay in a way that sitting at her knee and wishing to merge with her could not engender. By raising and

[19] Implicit in Susan Smith's 'Reinventing Grief Work' is the recognition that the positive aspect of mourning in Woolf's work is a rejection of the models which would necessitate a forgetting or a wallowing, but instead that "salvages the past in the interests of the present to create a mediated connection" (320)

reconciling with Mrs. Ramsay's memory, Lily manages to reconstruct a relationship with her that is not based in mimetic desire. To return to *Precarious Life*, Butler concludes that "Perhaps, rather, one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever […] To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself" (21-30). There is a cathartic experience in rearticulating her relationship to her own past, which need not come as a result of sacrificial unity.

Here, love is remade. Rather than a "bully with a crowbar", now "[l]ove had a thousand shapes"—where "lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate)" (183). Love, difficult as it was when the mother was a strut of the patriarchy, is still compromised; Tansley preaches "brotherly love" which explicitly excludes the feminine, "pumping love into that chilly place" when he was "making it his business to tell her women can't write, women can't paint, not so much that he believed it, as that for some odd reason he wished it" (187). The exclusion is a conscious effort—to deny love is a form of violence which renders even the perpetrator bereft. Similarly Mr. Carmichael exemplifies the modernist approach taken by male writers: his popular, postwar late Symbolism poetry sets him apart, "extremely impersonal; it said something about death; it said very little about love" (185). But as Lily "dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past there. Now Mrs. Ramsay got up, she remembered" (256). Lily's memory does not deny love in the way that Carmichael or Tansley's does.

Through this artistic connection, the "problem might be solved after all", Lily thinks, "to want and not to have", when Mrs. Ramsay appears in "perfect goodness", sitting in the chair and knitting as she had been years ago. Clewell reads Lily's final painting in 'The Lighthouse' as an open mourning process, one which is relational rather than redemptive, and does not close off the past and forget the lost object or the anguish of its loss. The past, and the mother, must be remembered, interpreted, and connected to if one is to move forward. The line down the centre of Lily's painting is connective, drawing together the two disparate halves of the visual scene which troubled her at the dinner party years ago. When Lily sees Mrs. Ramsay in the chair, it is without the mythological qualities impressed upon her by her husband or son, no longer nothing and no longer high priestess. She can see her and connect with her and this is rendered as Lily's ability to finish her painting and have "her vision"—both of Mrs. Ramsay and her creative endeavour. She "had something she must share"—

though it might be rolled up and stored in an attic and never seen again, it still becomes a reference point for the future (192).

The Passion of New Eve (1977)

According to Harriet Blodgett, Carter shifted at the end of the 1960s from "social realist to interrogator and critic of patriarchal culture".[20] Written after her time in Japan where she "became radicalised and realised what it meant to be a woman" (Carter 1992a: 28), there is a palpable shift in Carter's writing between *The Magic Toyshop* and *The Passion of New Eve* that comes with the change in theoretical and political discourse and engagement with contemporaneous feminist discourse. The subjects of Carter's investigation in *The Magic Toyshop* are re-cast and the interrogation of her criticism sharpened.

As with her previous work, the text is about systems that preexist the characters, not only gendered systems but compulsive heterosexuality in all its destructive and desirous paradigms which make untenable and unsustainable any mutuality and non-violent contact between men and women. Inevitably these systems are deeply entrenched in the mimetic process. *The Passion of New Eve* is a sustained, incisive critique not only of the methods by which women are inducted into this social order, but also a critique of the ways by which feminist criticism had yet to formulate a sustainable counter-paradigm extant of masculine symbolism. As in *The Sadeian Woman,* Carter recognises that there is no revolutionary end when one uses the same archetypes that have dehumanised and oppressed women under patriarchal power.

In 'The Feminine Female', Rachel Bowlby writes that Irigaray fails to "take advantage of the possibilities opened up by the anti-empirical theories" on which she draws. "It remains to be shown […] that the female body is itself productive of a distinctive mode of subjectivity" rather than a subjectivity which is, by virtue of a female body, "constrained into particular forms of representation" which Irigaray, by "reversal of the hierarchic order does nothing to displace" (62). Carter makes this same criticism in *The Passion of New Eve,* literalising the metaphors of Irigaray's psychoanalytic theories and dragging her female characters bodily through them. Sally Robinson describes Carter's critique as one that works through a "de-metaphorization" (107); *The Passion of New Eve*, like *The Magic Toyshop,* centres around the difficult physical and symbolic barriers which are constructed around the

[20] Harriet Blodgett. "Fresh Iconography: Subversive Fantasy by Angela Carter." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. XIV, No. 4 (Fall 1994): 49-55. P. 50. A contentious claim. I would hope my analysis of *Shadow Dance* and *The Magic Toyshop* would undermine this at least a little.

daughter's relationship to the father and mother. However, in *The Passion of New Eve*, this movement towards "becoming woman" as well as the symbols of familial domination are literalised and inflated into grotesque caricatures, which allows for a more complete confrontation. Woman, carved out of men's spaces by a fecund mother-goddess, must create her own subjectivity through her body—but finds this demand more than she can bear. The question of the text, identified by Jean Wyatt, begins with "Why does man (including Freud) need to represent woman as castrated?" (63). But the text asks another, equally relevant question alongside this core tenant of Freudian mythos: How does the mother exist and give birth outside of the phallic order? If 'mother' is a discursive category, an ontological status upon which the reproduction of masculine culture rests, then what is motherhood outside of the masculine order?

The text moves us through four spaces, each undergoing their own distinct sacrificial crisis, until finally the whole of America is subsumed in a war of unending violence. Furthermore, these are spaces which are described in tandem with multiple layers of cinematic metaphor, ending in Plato's metaphor of the cave. As Maria Ferreira describes in her essay on myth in *The Passion of New Eve*, the text is structured around "several distinct communities bent on surviving and eliminating the others" (287). She rightly identifies America as the modern Thebes, and Evelyn/Eve as the modern Oedipus (or Tireseas) sent to re-navigate the Oedipal model. While Ferreira places Carter within a wider context of speculative fiction, she does not interrogate Girard's thesis as a methodology for uncovering and demythologising the violent ritual present in the text. Despite this acknowledgement of what are, essentially, warring tribes of ideologies within the text, no analysis of mimetics is performed. And indeed, the two loosely-defined "utopias" present within *The Passion of New Eve* are mirrors of one another and based on the same underlying principle of scapegoating and ritualised violence.

While Zero is the infertile Father and head of his "church of Zero" (87), Mother is—as her name implies—the fecund, pre-Oedipal Mother-goddess within her own artificial *chora*. Both are entrapped by the gendered mimetic process that draws them into their violent social relations; both are constructed by Carter to critique the concurrent feminist theories which permeated 1970s gender discourse, which she saw as predicated upon the same violent discourse which inevitably cannot sustain any kind of nonviolent gender relations. And by placing the reader within the body of the abuser Evelyn and the abused Eve simultaneously, we are invited to investigate the means by which one necessitates the other. Ruth Charnock describes the text as interrogating "complicity with forms of gendered violence by

interpellating the reader as both victim and perpetrator of gendered violence […] Indeed, in *The Passion of New Eve*, one can never be entirely sure which Carter is mocking the most; the maniacal, subjugating diktats of patriarchy? Or the womb-centric pseudo-mysticism of much 1970s French feminist theory and theology? Neither is exempt from Carter's scorn and polemic" (172). Evelyn, now Eve, turns her back on both, and on the failure of the scapegoat mechanism to contain violence, and sails out to sea with her unborn child. These spaces which Evelyn/Eve encounter are drawn into conversation by their juxtaposition. Crucially, all of these spaces involve the co-option or degradation of mothers and motherhood. The text moves from Leilah's botched abortion to Mother's rape of and plan to impregnate the newly-created Eve, to Zero's harem filled with expectant but unfulfilled mothers, and then, finally, to Eve's impregnation by the film star Tristessa. The text weaves itself through these moments of degredation in which the greatest threat to female subjecthood is the potentiality for motherhood.

Desire, The Mirror, The Mother

The Passion of New Eve opens with a double mediation of the main character, Evelyn's, desire. The first is the film of Tristessa de St Ange, the silent film star whose "luminous presence" transcends "these erosions of temporality" which the aged celluloid presents. A literal projection, the image of Tristessa is "the most beautiful woman in the world". Simultaneously we have a second mediation, "some girl or other" whose "mediation" allows for a surrogate gift to Tristessa—"a little tribute of spermatozoa" (5). However the "triumph" of Tristessa's persisting beauty despite the passage of time "would die of duration in the end, and the surfaces that preserved your appearance were already wearing away" (5). These surfaces are flesh as much as screen. Evelyn, soon Eve, narrates the text in retrospect, and ponders the nature of Tristessa's endurance as a symbol:

> I think it was Rilke who so lamented the inadequacy of our symbolism—regretted so bitterly we cannot, unlike the (was it?) Ancient Greeks, find adequate external symbols for the life within us—yes, that's the quotation. But, no. He was wrong. Our external symbols must always express the life within us with absolute precision; how could they do otherwise, since that life has generated them? Therefore we must not blame our poor symbols if they take forms that seem trivial to us, or absurd, for the symbols themselves have no control over their own fleshly manifestations, however paltry they may be; the nature of our life alone has determined their forms.
> A critique of these symbols is a critique of our lives.
> Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah! (6)

With this passage, Carter outlines the argument of her feminist politics which permeate the novel. Undermining the dichotomy between the materialist and the psychoanalytic, Carter

conceives these two processes as inexorably intertwined. Just as the film-star image of Tristessa, "romantic dissolution, necrophilia incarnate" (7), cannot be disentangled from Evelyn's fantasies, neither can they be wholly divorced from Tristessa's material body: "She had been the dream itself made flesh through the flesh I knew her in was not flesh itself but only a moving picture of flesh, real but not substantial" (7-8). Accordingly, Laura Mulvey writes how "Angela Carter manages to put into a few words something about the cinema that critics and theorists can spread over chapters. Tristessa conflates with the cinema itself, its material properties and its own fragility in the face of time" (242-43). She is, literally, a projection, as well as a figurative projection of Evelyn's desires.

With this introduction, Tristessa is introduced to us as an exemplary woman, an exemplary object of desire, and therefore an exemplary mother within the triangular desire of both mimesis and the Oedipal model. As an object of desire she must exist; as an object of foundational civilization, she must die. As Evelyn admires, all of Tristessa's roles end in death; similarly all of Evelyn's projected desires will go unfulfilled. Tristessa "was only notional; you were a piece of pure mystification […] that recipe for perennial dissatisfaction" (6). This substitution is unable to completely satisfy the desire for the real; when the girl Evelyn brings to the cinema begins to cry, it is to Evelyn's "furious embarrassment", as he assumes she is "Crying, perhaps, to lose me" (9). The idea that he is an object of her desire—that he, in turn can be possessed by a symbol of his own desire—is one to be reviled and rejected; he leaves her and goes to America.

Addressed and spoken to Tristessa personally, *The Passion of New Eve* is a movement of both 'woman' and 'mother' from iconography to ontology—from mythic status to a full subject beyond the confines of mimetic desire. And to do this, Carter critiques the centrality of the Mother-myth in all its forms, particularly within contemporaneous feminist criticism. Sally Keenan, in 'Angela Carter's *The Sadeian Woman*: feminism as treason', has explored *The Sadeian Woman* and its critical reception; Carter, she contends, challenges both "the idealization of motherhood" in both "the recreation of mother goddesses" present in Mary Daly and Susan Griffin's ecofeminist ideologies which essentialize reproduction and motherhood as a kind of moral superiority, as well as "the revisionary psychoanalytic theories of the French feminists" exemplified by Luce Irigaray, whose work centred the maternal body as a challenge to the dominance of the phallus (Keenan, 124). Carter, in Scott Dimovitz's words, uses allegory "as a critique of the psychoanalytically structured political economy of the psyche in our historical moment" ('Angela Carter's Narrative Chiasmus', 84).

It is important, therefore, to identify the series of cinematic screens which occupy the text, as there is "an underlying analogy between the screen and the mirror as two sides of the same figural coin" (Cavallaro, 85); Evelyn/Eve manages to escape the cave of "the entire Platonic shadow show" (110) which Tristessa embodies, as well as draw her out of it by the end of the text. This conjuring of Plato's allegory of the cave comes to color our understanding of Carter's cinema. As Carter says, "there is something sacred about the cinema, which is to do with it being public, to do with people going together, with the intention of visualizing, experiencing the same experience, having the same revelation" (*Angela Carter's Curious Room*). Carter's fascination with the cinema is its ability to create collective myths and collective fantasies.[21]

From the immediate, enclosed, and darkened cinema in London at the opening of the text, to the mirrors in Leilah's apartment in the black, violent dinginess of New York City, to the recovery room in the subterranean depths of Beulah filled with film clips of motherhood, to even Tristessa's glass house filled with mirrored surfaces, *The Passion of New Eve* places Evelyn/Eve in a series of projected desires he/she is meant to internalize and imitate through an endlessly repetitive and inescapable system of mimetic desire. The screen and the mirror both absorb Evelyn/Eve's desires and reflect them back—and both reflective surfaces are represented as an exemplary means of matricide.

The City and Collective Violence

By drawing from speculative and dystopian fiction, *The Passion of New Eve* continues and expands on the themes present within Carter's earlier, post-apocalyptic, speculative fiction novel *Heroes and Villains*. This novel, too, presents a picture of the excesses of mimetic violence; the ordered, preservationist society of the Professors is raided by roaming tribes of Barbarians, who operate on their own set of rituals cobbled together from foraged and reconstructed symbols from the past. As Eva Karpinsky writes on her analysis of the dystopian nature of *Heroes and Villains*, the text critiques "myth making in the Barthesian sense of culturally constructed collective fictions or clichés", ultimately concluding that Carter unveils the "utopian elements of myth and the mythic element of utopian thought" in which patriarchal ritual is a foundational aspect of the maintenance of both the Professors and the Barbarians (138). Indeed, in *Heroes and Villains,* the binarism inherent to their way of

[21] For a more thorough examination of Carter's engagement with Plato's allegory of the cave, see Heidi Yeandle's *Angela Carter and Western Philosophy*. London: Palgrave, 2017.

life is maintained through dominance and violence, exploited by characters such as Marianne's father and the enigmatic and charismatic Donnelly to create and maintain very specific relational strategies and interpersonal bonds between these dualities. As Dani Cavallaro explores in *The World of Angela Carter*, Marianne throws "into relief both societies' injustices and thus exposing their underlying similarities" (79). This similarity is, in a Girardian view, the same principle of effacement which plagues Honeybuzzard and Morris in *Shadow Dance* as well as Finn and Philip in *The Magic Toyshop*; Marianne, like Melanie, and as Evelyn/Eve comes to be, uses her position as both inside and outsider to this enactment of mimetic desire in order to mitigate, critique, and eventually (in the case of Evelyn/Eve), to walk away from it. To quote Cavallaro again, both cultures promote "a rampant psychology of fear as its governing mechanism, persistently constructing its antagonist as the dark other in which that fear may locate a stable focus" (79). Karpkinski's investigation into the "dystopian romance" of *Heroes and Villains* can be brought forward to *The Passion of New Eve*, as "many works of dystopian fiction make the reader test the validity of a certain society in terms of the viability of a personal relationship" (137). Karpinski even comes close to outlining a methodology on Girardian terms, as she describes *Heroes and Villains* as "dramatizing such self-conscious desire as a force within patriarchal discourse, fending off gendered or cultural "others" whom it actively produces in order to secure its own boundaries […] desire becomes a colonizing drive acting out the violence of incorporation or destruction" (140). This critique of desire articulated by Carter is brought forward into *The Passion of New Eve*.[22]

Carter's frequent return to America as a setting for her fiction is also reflected on by Linden Peach, who, reading 'John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore'* (1993), shows how matricide is ingrained into the American landscape: "In the case of America, the symbolic loss of the 'mother', through the way in which America as a nation privileges its frontier mythologies, creates a void of overwhelming emptiness and intense loneliness, which a ruthless, masculinist ideology seems to have stepped in to fill, resulting in the destruction of the wilderness and the genocide of the Native American" (102-3). The America in *The Passion of New Eve* is "disintegrating" (103) as their systems of myth and illusion begin to collapse under their own weight.

[22] Karpinski also points out that Jewel's foster-mother Mrs. Green, enacts the "motif of women's active part in sustaining inequality and oppression by "reproducing" the system, in both a literal biological and discursive sense" (Karpinski, 142).

The city is “a personification of contemporary postmodern patriarchy” (85). Initially a site of mystification and falsity, a site of Plato's myth of the cave which Evelyn happily watches without a thought for how these shadows are constructed: “I’d been hooked on a particular dream, all manner of old moves ran through my head when I first heard I’d got the job there […] the shadowless inhabitants of a finite and succinct city where the ghosts who haunt the cities of Europe could have found no cobweb corners to roost in” (11). But when Evelyn arrives, believing himself to be exiting the cave that sustains the shadows of the cinema screen, he instead enters a New York in the midst of a sacrificial crisis: “nobody knew how to express panic, in spite of an overwhelming sense of catastrophe; the victims seemed estranged even from their own fear. […] I was astonished to see so many beggars in the rank, disordered streets, where crones and drunkards disputed with the rats for possession of the choicest morsels of garbage” (11). Proselytizers and graffiti exclaim the world’s rage as the end of days arrives. The language of Girard’s sacrificial crisis permeates Carter’s depiction of the city. The sacrifice of the victim, the English lamb, becomes psychically necessary. This is a symbolic projection, as much artifice as reality; “That the city had become nothing but a gigantic metaphor for death kept me, in my innocence, all agog in my ring-side seat. The movie ran towards its last reel” (15). The city is beset by a plague of rats, these “sleek, black monsters” (12) which gobble up everything in sight. The rain is “gelatinous” and sulphuric and strangers approach Evelyn in the street to “concern myself with spiritual matters” or that “God had arrived on a celestial bicycle to proclaim the last Judgement was at hand” (12). In the alembic of the city, the old symbols are exploding magnificently. As the old soldier-cum-alchemist who lives above Evelyn proclaims, “The age of reason is over” (13) and “Chaos, the earliest state of disorganised creation, blindly impelled towards the creation of a new order of phenomena of hidden meanings. The fructifying chaos of anteriority, the state before the beginning of the beginning” (14). For “Who may not be resurrected if, first, he has not died?” (14).

The introduction of Leilah as the styled feminine "avatar" of the city is fraught with this same imagery of sacrifice, voracity, and engulfment. Her flesh is of the city itself: dark, dissolute, and threatening to Evelyn; “she was voracious, insatiable, though coldly so, as if driven by a drier, more cerebral need than a sexual one, as if forced to the act again and again be, perhaps, an exacerbated, never-to-be-satisfied curiosity. And, almost, a vindictiveness—yet a vindictiveness directed towards herself, as though, each time she submitted herself, not to me, but to a craving she despised, or else to a loathed but imperiously demanding ritual, as if this, this exorcism by sensuality, was what her sensuality needed to make it real” (18). But

as soon as he sees her "I was determined to have her" (19). The consistent return to ritual and role is one in which Leilah is subsumed, submitting wholly to Evelyn's voracious and destructive sexual demands. She is what Girard would describe as a narcissistic woman—a woman who makes men desire her by desiring herself, who kickstarts the mimetic process through a conscious effort to inspire rivalry. As she is about to touch him with "the enamelled blades of her fingertips", "my senses were eclipsed in absolute panic. This panic bore no relation to any of the titillating fears I had, up to that moment, experienced in the city; it was an archaic, atavistic panic before original darkness and silence, before the mystery of herself she unequivocally offered me" (25) The graffito in chalk reads "INTROITE ET HIC DII SUNT", exhorting the gods to enter. Evelyn enters into the hysterium of the dying city, viewing Leilah as its seductive avatar. They are in the presence of the gods, demanding sacrifice.

The text at this moment turns to the bacchanal of the sacrificial crisis, in which both Leilah and Evelyn are reduced to an atavistic function. "All my existence was now gone away into my tumescence; I was nothing but cock and I dropped down upon her like, I supposed, a bird of prey […] My full-fleshed and voracious beak tore open the poisoned wound of love between her thighs, suddenly, suddenly" (25). Leilah is his "gift", the "city's gift" that restores to him his sense of mastery, as "the crucible of chaos delivered her to me for my pleasure" (27). She is, in his view, a "born victim" (28).

The mediation of the mirror is the core of the relationship—and antagonism—between Evelyn and Leilah under the principles of the mimetic paradigm: "she, too, seemed to abandon herself in the mirror, to abandon her self to the mirror, and allowed herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream into which the mirror cast me" (30). While Evelyn views Leilah as fully within the scope of the mirror's erotic, fantastic projection, he neglects his own placement with this dream which the mirror's hold also reflects. He cannot, as yet, see his own desires as constructed as Leilah's own artificial form. Mimesis and its machinations remain closed to him as a man; Leilah, however, remains aware of the process and through her subtle manipulation leads Evelyn to her mother—cursing him to have his genitals removed. It is no surprise that Evelyn ceases to desire her and so, within the scope of the novel, she ceases to exist in the form of Leilah at all; yet when she turns the same indifference to him he is "piqued", his vanity harmed (34). For in his heart, he "knew it was my own weakness, my own exhaustion that she had, in some sense, divined and reflected for me what had made her so attractive to me. She was a perfect woman; like the moon, she only gave reflected light. She had mimicked me, she had become the thing I wanted of her, so that

she could make me love her and yet she had mimicked me so well she had also mimicked the fatal lack in me that meant I was not able to love her because I myself was so unlovable" (34). When he finally leaves her, as sterile and emotionless to himself, he sees her and the city as a contagion; "The sickness of the ghetto and the slow delirious sickness of femininity, its passivity, its narcissism, have infected me because of her" (37). Both her sex and her race create in him a terrible fear of infection that makes him—while recognized as irrational—fear for his life. By forcing her abortion, he "saved myself from that most brutal of all assaults, the siege of the other" (34).

Leilah's mimicry fails not because it is an imperfect reflection—like the cracked mirror of her bedroom—but because it is too perfect, and Evelyn becomes disgusted by his own desire. He recognizes, though does not respond to the inhumanity of his own reflected desire. Leilah as the "perfect woman", reflecting light, is the same moon-faced projection as Tristessa, whose reflective silver-screen surface presents the same affected desires which demand the women's inevitable deaths. The distinction is that Leilah's reflection is not made of film-stock; it is her flesh that is discarded and left for dead, pushed from Evelyn's mind as he escapes the clutches of the city to search for "himself" in the desert.

Evelyn leaves behind "the dark room, the mirror, the woman" (39). He departs both the cinema screen, Leilah's apartment, and the dark city in which he has become enmeshed. But these are the same thing—the woman is both the mirror and the dark room, as Evelyn will soon discover as he descends into Beulah's subterranean laboratory, for "our destinations choose us, choose us before we are born […] drawing us inexorably towards the source we have forgotten […] while the world, in time, goes forward and so presents us with the illusion of motion, though all our lives we move through the curvilinear galleries of the brain towards the core of the labyrinth within us" (39).

The Phallic Mother

> Beulah is a profane place. It is a crucible. It is the home of the woman who calls herself the Great Parricide, also glories in the title of Grand Emasculator; ecstasy their only anesthetic, the priests of Cybele sheared off their parts to exalt her, ran bleeding, psalmodising, crazed through the streets. This woman has many names but her daughters call her Mother. Mother has made herself into an incarnated deity; she has quite transformed her flesh, she has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle. She is also a great scientist who makes extraordinary experiments and I was destined to become the subject of one of them; but I was ignorant of everything when, fainting, I arrived in Beulah. (49)

The introduction of Mother in the text is fraught with intentionally raised and judiciously employed feminine fictions, all of which are constructed and utilized to serve a

fantastical image of a pre-Oedipal mother. Mother is a “chthonic deity, a presence always present in the shaping structure of dream” (47). But Beulah and Mother’s project of becoming-woman is one deeply entrenched in the patriarchal imaginary.

The interior of Beulah is both womblike and filled with constantly shifting, retractable, and hidden mirrors. Evelyn is continuously confronted with his own image and its constant metamorphosis until the final transformation that would render him estranged from his own body. In Beulah, “myth is a made thing, not a found thing” (56), and Evelyn is “crudely seduced” into “a form of belief” in his surroundings. He is enmeshed within the myth of Mother’s conscious perpetuation, of her conscious mimicry of femininity (57). Mother is reviving an “ancient, heroic archetype” (79) which necessitates violence. Mother will “institute her own magic and totalitarian rule in which time stood still and all the phallic towers broken down" (79). Along with their list of female deities they also invoke Jocasta, as Evelyn, puzzled, notes parenthetically: “(Jocasta? Why Jocasta?)” (63) Ritually they invoke the Oedipal structure in order to perpetuate it, and so Eve is literally a castrated man, a female caricature derived from male fantasy and created through a process of negation and enforced absence. Furthermore, Eve’s female body and violently-imposed femininity are created solely for the purpose of obligatory motherhood. To peer into the past for female subjectivity, in Carter’s view, is to follow the same well-trod path that leads to exclusion, violence, and consolatory nonsense. To reimagine and repurpose a sacrificial point of origin, to literally recreate the Oedipal model of female psychosexual development, is, according to Girard, simply to reinscribe a foundation of violent mimesis. The process of becoming-mother must be reformulated without an uncritical acceptance and repetition of a monstrous mother figure, imagined to be a prediscursive identity but in reality just another image of patriarchal myth.

Establishing the creation of Eve as the means of mimetic violence, Carter writes:

> Vengeance, I call it; though, if I’ve suffered since then a clarification of the world, if now I comprehend even a little the nature of the flesh, I owe this knowledge to the illumination afforded me by the sullen flash of Holy Mother’s obsidian scalpel—Evelyn, the first victim of her wild justice, trimmed with a knife to Eve, first child of her manufactory. (50)

The use of the words ‘vengeance’ and ‘wild justice’ brings with it the understanding that this is the restitution for a crime; the crime of patriarchy, perpetuated upon women’s bodies. Despite this, Mother recreates the method by which patriarchy is reproduced in order to invert it, rather than subvert it in the way Eve eventually comes to do. The community of Beulah is still demarcated and sustained by radical exclusion, sacrifice, and myth; this women’s utopia cannot maintain itself as a simple mockery of the dystopia which exists aboveground. By conforming to a man-made archetype Mother merely attempts to co-opt

male power instead of envision a true alternative. Even a feminist refiguring of the virgin birth, of parthenogenesis, is going to fall into the same patriarchal traps that render women subordinate. Irigaray finds this same wish in Freudian thinking, where if the mother desires a girl child instead of a boy in order to "*repeat and represent* her own birth", it still requires "the repetition-displacement of the maternal function as it has been cathected by man" (*Speculum*, 36). However, Irigaray's own thesis can't meaningfully critique this desire as it is transferred upon the woman. Mother grabs a hold on mimetic desire for herself; she is still trapped within its throes. "[A]nd so I was lead, like a sacrificial animal, to the altar, to the operating table, where Mother waited with a knife" (69). Evelyn imagines "all the women in the world" watching his castration in a collective murder of the masculine. There is "a lowering sense of antique ritual […] the full panoply of human sacrifice, in fact" (70).

After his literal rape he is ceremonially raped, this time with the phallus object of the knife; he notes the irony. This becomes an illustration of women's placement within the sacrificial paradigm: the death of men and male society requires reconstruction through women's efforts. Evelyn, by dying, is replaced by Eve—but Eve is pushed into accepting the role of reproducer of Evelyn. Completely neglecting the mediation of another body, Mother completely discards the entire process of mutuality, as Eve is now "first of all beings in the world". Furthermore, Mother proclaims, "you can seed yourself and fruit yourself. With the aid of my sperm-bank, you're entirely self-sufficient, Eva!" (76-7). This "self-sufficiency", then, comes at the price of reproducing and repeating the sterile patriarchal method of self-replication. Though Mother claims Eve will be the "first" to do so, she merely becomes the first woman to control such a process—though to the same ends. It is a brilliantly literal translation of women's status within mimetic culture. The distinction here is that the sacrifice is perpetuated in the name of female superiority—though any imperialistic hierarchy that requires death to sustain itself is subject to these same rules. Carter understood and specifically highlighted the counterproductive methods by which the 1970's feminist movement courted masculine myths that only perpetuated women's oppression. Rejecting fathers is simply a self-created, self-perpetuated destiny which rejects complicity or compliance because it ignores half of humanity altogether. The apotheosis Mother promises to Eve is identical to the patriarchal scripts that circumscribe humanity: motherhood identical to a mirror image of a past life and a past ideal, simply recreating the conditions which create the scene of the first violence.

Evelyn's transformation into a woman is merely a crash-course in mimesis, as he is continuously confronted with images of himself and later images he is meant to mimic fully

and unquestioningly. Everything from the Virgin Mary coddling an infant Christ to animals suckling their young, the mimetic process is co-opted in a more literal way by Beulah in order to instill motherhood into Eve. And predominant among these images is Tristessa, a "part of the ritual attrition of my change in ontological status: this is what you've made of women! And now you yourself become what you've made […] Again and again they played me through your marvellous imitation of feeling […] And, to this day, I do not know if Mother wanted me to model my new womanhood upon your tenebrous deliquesence and so regulate me always to the shadowed half being of reflected light" (71-2). A reflection of a reflection, Eve is made to internalize and reflect the womanhood represented by Tristessa: a psychological mother, as a man Evelyn desired her, and now as a woman Eve must model her.

Zero and His Harem

Where Mother/Beulah is an inverse of the Oedipal model and the matricidal social relations that form through patriarchy, Zero is her opposite; contrasted as they are, Evelyn/Eve demonstrates the effaced differences between Zero's hypermasculine control and Mother's engulfing goddess-worship. While Mother's foundation is the "great parricide", Zero's desire to kill Tristessa in order to establish his personal utopia entrenches the film star as the true mother of the text.

Zero, though the epitome of self-destructive masculinity, is betrayed by a deep insecurity that requires the subjugation and adoration of those around him; while the women of his compound exist in a harsh and animalistic reality he, in contrast, requires “the paraphernalia of civilised society such as cutlery, meat, soap, shoes, etc” (87). He places himself above his wives by the man-made comforts and his noncommunication. His body is “an anonymous instrument of torture” as he rapes Eve in the sand, demonstrating his inhumanity as he turns Eve’s body into her “own rack” (86). Eve’s entire life, as well as those of his other wives, comes to revolve around him and his unchanging needs. Instead of the mutuality exemplified by Finn and Melanie or, later, Tristessa and Eve, he completely subsumes his wives in his own creative power, the women becoming little beyond props for his own imagination. He describes himself as “the freezing point in Centigrade” who “manufactured [news of the world] to his own designs” (101). With his poems “howled and danced” but never spoken, his art that only he is able to understand, he “attempted to maintain an existence only in terms of expletives and tableau vivants” (85), representations

divorced from mutual understanding and, as pure, incorporeal sound, from his own body. Furthermore Zero's intentions illustrate the ultimate masculine design of the self-replicating semen: "I donate you for free the elixium vitae distilled by my immaculate testicles" Zero tells Eve when he has brought her to his home and raped her, sanctifying the act in a hasty marriage. "Alas! It won't print out any new Zeros until the Witch, the Bitch, the Dyke is dead!" (92). His irrational hatred of female homosexuality is the denial of any and all female relationality, and he codes the process of reproduction as merely "print[ing] out … new Zeros" through the mediation of his wives. Eve instantly recognizes the dialectic at play between Zero and his harm, as "his myth depended on their conviction; a god-head, however shabby, needs believers to maintain his credibility. Their obedience ruled him […] By himself, he would have been nothing. Only his hatred of them kept them enthralled" (99-100). The women who exist within this pre-language commune still conduct their small rebellions, however ones that ultimately undergird and therefore reenforce Zero's power, for "if Zero did not hear them, it was as if they had not spoken" (87).

Zero exists continuously in his "solitary state" even as his method of mastery requires this continuous, forceful exertion of violence in order to sustain itself from its own erosion and demise. As David Punter notes in his study of masculinity in Carter's fiction, Zero is a "representation of the still point, the urge towards control and stasis" (56). Zero's body is monolithic and one-sexed to the extreme: one-legged, one-eyed, and phallic, he is a reference to Irigaray's understanding of masculine sex and patriarchy as linear and singular. But he is also a clear pastiche of Charles Manson and Manson's racial and sexual politics; he and his wives plan to take over Los Angeles once the cities have erupted over with racial violence, believing themselves capable of reasserting a hierarchic order after the dissolution of the old. Firstly, however, Zero must kill Tristessa. Tristessa's death is meant to usher in a new lifestyle for Zero and his harem: "After this fecund murder, Zero would descend on Los Angeles […] and start to repopulate the suddenly barren continent, now empty of all but the tribe of Zero" (98-9). He reveals this to them like "scripture" and the wives—excepting Eve—believe him as they are "dedicated […] body, heart and soul, to the Church of Zero" (99). In essence, he plans to utilize the aftermath of the sacrificial crisis to his own ends, and does so through matricide.

Tristessa and the Encounter with The Mother

The female body with which Mother furnishes Eve is viewed only as a mark of victimhood; Eve possesses a "female apparatus, one of exquisite detail and superb charm" which is "the last thing I needed" (83). But this body does not render her a woman; in Beulah, it takes more than images of Raphael's Madonna to render her a "real woman" (80), and the proposition of a virgin birth cannot fulfil Eve's "function". Neither does her role as Zero's wife turn her into anything more than "passing for a woman" as many women do their whole lives (101). It is only through her connection to Tristessa that Eve comes to a fully-formed female subjecthood.

When Tristessa is first fully introduced in the text—as a living body instead of an image on the cinema screen—she is self-mummifying in a glass tomb and the sole living body within her waxwork collection of dead celebrities, called "the hall of the immortals", where Tristessa "had cheated the clock in her castle of purity, her ice palace, her glass shrine" (119). Eve says how Tristessa "would always be so beautiful as long as celluloid remained in complicity with the phenomenon of persistence of vision" (5) but even in her first mention she is a replication of a replication, a film adaptation of depictions of women from Madeleine Usher to Catherine Earnshaw (7-8), and emblematic of the representations of women which are impossible to embody because they exist only as icons, reduced to eternal suffering and despair by male power. As Hite notes, it is "impossible for anyone to *be* the sexed woman of conventional representation, not because this woman is depicted as experiencing herself in ways that "real" women do not but because she is not depicted as experiencing anything at all" (123). Her body is "frozen in the amber of innumerable spools of celluloid" and her image/being "could be extracted and endlessly recycled in a technological eternity" (118). But Tristessa's stasis is a carefully preserved fiction. "You had subjected yourself to such an arid metamorphosis," she states, placing this at odds with Tristessa's subsequent transformation in the text. When found, she is "like an allegory of chastity in a medieval romance" (144). Here, Tristessa replicates the same sterile fiction of the patriarchal imagination. Even the ascension into Tristessa's tower of glass is filled with reflections. She is described in the monochromatic coloration of a silent film: dressed in white, with long white hair and pale skin clouded with fine lines like decayed film-stock. It is a ghostlike, moonlike, reflective and luminous image.

But crucially, she is "old enough to be [Eve's] mother" (123). When Tristessa is discovered and her penis displayed, the "atmosphere of a bacchanalia overtook the rout"

(130). Replacing one ritual with another, Zero and his harem decide not to murder Tristessa but instead to wed her to Eve; they, like Mother, force the son to desire and possess his mother. Reflected in the endless mirrors of the dressing room, "an entire audience composed of Zero applauded the transformation that an endless sequence of reflections showed me was a double drag. […] Under the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove" (132). Tristessa, simlarly, grows "back into his reflected self" (134). They are put before the altar of Tristessa's resting place and the waxworks of dead celebrities are haphazardly reassembled into patchwork witnesses. "Both were the bride, both the groom in this ceremony", presided over by the emblem of fragile patriarchy that is Zero. Afterwards, the wives "prepared [Eve] for the sacrifice" (136). The murder of Tristessa to restore Zero's fertility is, instead, enacted as a mock yet graphic marriage and mutual defilement of Tristessa and Eve. This, in Eve's view "ratified" her "womanhood", as impressive a fiction as Tristessa's maleness (138). But in the wake of this totemic display of sexuality, Zero's dominance falls apart and the glass palace destroys itself (140).

As Eve explains, "that glass mausoleum that had been the world and now is smashed" (191) is a palace which Tristessa had built "in his own image" (140). The house, the penultimate cave of shadows, is "an illusion sustained by light and a vast rotating apparatus of reproduction, signifies the postmodernist cycle of self-construction and self-replication which America […] has become" (Peach, 100). When the final calamity of the house is finished, Eve and Tristessa escape as the sole survivors of the event. Wandering the desert in biblical allusion, they are as far as they are aware the last vestiges of a failed civilization. The violence of their experiences has been written on their bodies: they both bleed from wounds inflicted by Zero and the house itself. They are two women who have been left to pick up the pieces from the detritus of a sacrificial culture. They are the start of a new civilization: the traumatized refugees of a past culture besieged and consumed by violence. This postapocalyptic position in the desert is liberating for both Eve and Tristessa. Stripped of their fictions, they are allowed to enact the fructifying bodily encounter denied to them up to this point.

It is this transformation that Rachel Carroll overlooks in her critique of Carter's treatment of Tristessa in her analysis ''Violent Operations': Revisiting the Transgendered Body in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*'. Charging Carter with resting "authenticity" of womanhood "on the criteria of reproductive sexuality—the keystone of heteronormative constructions of sexuality" (244) and situating the violence Tristessa

experiences as corrective punishment for transgression, Carroll fails to account for the mutuality that develops between Eve and Tristessa or the transformation Tristessa undergoes when she is pulled away from the mirror/screen of male imagination. Carroll locates Tristessa's "ineradicable […] maleness" (*Passion of New Eve*, 173) in "the fact of her penis, and her arousal and ejaculation are then taken as evidence of the restoration of her (male) heterosexuality" (Carroll, 251). However, within the text Tristessa's penis is described explicitly by Lilith as "his most female part" because it is "his instrument of mediation between himself and the other" (*Passion of New Eve*, 128).

Furthermore, against Carroll's assertion, Eve's implied pregnancy does not enforce "compulsive heterosexuality" or "authenticate her status as a biological woman, problematically reviving motherhood as the final sanction of 'true' femininity" (Carroll: 2011, 252). Carroll fails to see Eve's implied pregnancy as anything beyond signifying what Lee Edelman describes as "the telos of the social order" (Edelman, 11) despite the obvious contrast Carter makes between this pregnancy and the pregnancy that was to be the actual telos of Eve's fabricated female body. Eve's unborn child will have "two fathers and two mothers" (*Passion of New Eve,* 187) and, through the mediation of Tristessa's body and the mutuality that existed between them, this pregnancy is not self-replicating a patriarchal mode of creation. Their union is not heteronormative as Carroll suggests, but represents the text's undermining of the dichotomy and the unchanging mode of patriarchal self-replication that such a one-sided union implies.

While Carroll is correct in her assertion that the "double marriage" of Eve/Evelyn and the female/male Tristessa is potentially queer but falls short, she neglects the circumstances under which this "marriage, the formal conclusion to pastorals" (*Passion of New Eve,* 133) takes place. Still in the glass castle, the pair are dressed and made up by Zero's harem into pastiches of the feminine and masculine, taking clothing from Tristessa's own cinematic wardrobe and "building up again the spectacular fiction of [Tristessa's] beauty. He began, by miraculous degrees, to grow back into his reflected self" (133-4). It is no accident that the stultifying glass bed where Tristessa lay desiccated and hollow with her wax figures becomes their altar. They kiss at Zero's command and, unlike when they later suck at "the water bottle of each other's mouth" (149), Eve described it as "like kissing a dead person" (135-6). She remarks how "the false universals of myth transformed us … we were being composed of echoes" (ibid., 136). Dressed as a stereotypical bride and groom, the power of clothes is exemplified here, and, as Stephen Heath writes, "Adornment *is* the woman, she exists veiled: only thus can she represent lack, be what is wanted" (52). However, it is this literal veil—the

wedding veil in which she portrayed the tragic wedding of Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*—which traps Tristessa; she is tangled and strung up in the trailing net and it is Eve who must cut her free with a piece of broken glass (*Passion of New Eve*, 139). The potentiality of the marriage to be queer is subverted only by the violence in it which is imposed by Zero and his harem. But, it is in leaving the glass palace behind, with Tristessa no longer abhorring her "most female part", that Tristessa is finally transformed into her female aspect without the need for the clothes that bind her to the fiction of femininity that is the lack of desire and male desire born of mimesis and possession. "Before my eyes, even though they'd shaved him and scrubbed the white paint from his face, in all his pared-down integrity of a death's head, he changed into his female aspect. He reverted entirely to the sinuous principle of his notion of femininity" (156). It is for this transgression that Tristessa is murdered; without her dresses, rings, and long hair, she has become fully female and it is this transformation born of mutuality for which she is shot. In the end, as Eve acknowledges, "He, she—neither will do for you, Tristessa" (143).

Tristessa's murder—and the foundational act of matricide—is performed by yet another cult of children seeking to restore the social order. But while they pledge themselves to "God" and "America", they seek to restore symbols which have been emptied of meaning and rely on murder to solidify their boundaries. It is this loss that propels Eve, the daughter now carrying the result of a mutual encounter with the mother-figure, to leave the withered America behind.

The End of The Beginning

As *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* opens with Desiderio opining the loss of the ever-fictitious, spectral Albertina, a phantasmic projection of his own desire, so does Evelyn give a tribute to the spectral screen image of Tristessa. But through the course of the text there is a deliberate movement away from spectral, fictitious mediations of desire and towards a corporeality which, by the novel's close, accepts an interrelational mode of subjectivity that has moved away from "caricatures, living by outmoded symbols" through a "textual embodiment" (Suleiman, 140). Eve, as a son and as a daughter, resists subsumption into either the maternal or paternal symbolic. Carter demonstrates that their network of desire and mimesis is the same, with both attempting to construct a female consciousness around an understanding of a physical body which is, at its core, unable to articulate itself and its desires. But a counter-subjectivity is not formed through a rejection of that body—male or

female—but rather a reclaiming of it as a means through which positive relationships can be formed with others. It is only when Evelyn/Eve moves away from such screens and enclosed dark spaces that he/she is able to comprehend the world in a new and nuanced way. Desiderio, and Carter, solve "the problem of the unconscious […] as if the critique were an end in itself" (Dimovitz, 'Angela Carter's Narrative Chiasmus', 99). Whereas Desiderio both rejects and realizes his desire through his murder of Albertina, Evelyn instead assimilates and transmutes his/her desire into an intersubjective relationship with the mother. Both Mother and Zero seek to impregnate her through coercive and self-replicating means, either to parthenogenetically become "self-sufficient" and birth a new messiah, or to "print out new Zeroes"; only Eve's intersubjective, bodily encounter with the once-spectral mother in Tristessa creates the "messiah" of a new age.

In Tristessa's eyes, Eve sees herself "reflected twice […] it is the abyss of myself, of emptiness, of inward void. I, she, we are outside history. We are beings without a history, we are mysteriously twinned by our synthetic life" (125). As Eve consistently notes, it is "the end and the beginning of the world" (171), it is "YEAR ONE" (172). The people existing within this violent structure recognize the unmaking of the previous world; they do not acknowledge the reconstruction of the old in their revolutionary return to the beginning. But by the end of the text, Eve encounters Mother's godhead throne beside a "mirror propped against the rugged wall, a fine mirror in a curly, gilt frame; but the glass was broken, cracked right across many times so it reflected nothing, was a bewilderment of splinters and I could not see myself nor any portion of myself in it" (181). The mirror broken, Eve is no longer a reflection of an old, phallic Mother, which was always just a construction of masculine desire. Linden Peach sees Carter as acknowledging that "America is the future from which late capitalist Western society will have to begin again" (102)—Eve has set out to begin again, pregnant with her connection to a resuscitated mother.

Woolf & Carter: Beyond Oedipus

In these texts, Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter both turn to a critique of the Oedipal model as an ultimately unsustainable and sacrificial model of interpersonal relations which will result in violence and death. Rather than the naturalised function of Freudian theory, Woolf and Carter both demonstrate the effacement and dissimulation which is required to sustain this model. However, both also reject Irigaray's consolatory fictions which are bodily-derived and are unable to establish a means of relation outside of the Oedipal paradigm.

Griselda Pollock, in her essay 'Beyond Oedipus', sees the refusal to move beyond the Oedipal theoretically ultimately arrests feminist investigations into psychoanalytic subjectivity (Pollock, 90). Mr Ramsay's "beak of brass" and Evelyn's "full-fleshed and voracious beak", engendered by the Oedipal model of social relations, descend upon women for their sympathy and caresses—an in both texts they are halted, blunted, thrown away. Both novels reconfigure a potential means of becoming-woman and becoming-mother which are not a part of the masculine imaginary. Eve's encounter with Tristessa and Lily's encounter with Mrs Ramsay both move from the spectral to the physical and from the masculine imaginary to one of reconfigured, feminine specificity, which is "understood not as a place or organ, but as a register of trans-subjectivity and encounter of the several" (Pollock 103, after Ettinger).

Crucially, the relationship with the mother is an intergenerational one. Rather than beings "without history", unconsciously repeating the same social institutions and relational systems that bring about boundaries and violence, Lily and Eve establish a relationship with the image of the mother which both brings the mother out of the realm of the purely symbolic as well as formulates a subversive history between generations of women which allows for a future which does not fall into these same unconscious repetitions which a lack of history would engender.

But the relationship to the mother in *To The Lighthouse* and *The Passion of New Eve* as put forward by Woolf and Carter are both decidedly ambivalent. *Ambivalence* is one of those delicious words which Girard defines in *Violence and the Sacred* as "pointing out a problem which remains to be solved" (1). But neither Woolf nor Carter can aim to solve the problem they present—they can't, not without a context of women, without a history that until this moment has not been written down for women's benefit. All Woolf can do, all Carter can do, all Mrs Ramsay can do, all Tristessa can do, all Lily can do, all Eve can do, all the women of the Society for Asking Questions can do, is sweep up all the papers and solemnly make us a present of the lot, to create a connection that may allow us and our descendants to use our own voice and create our own society to challenge and question masculine culture. Carter and her titular New Eve sail into the unknown, pregnant with promises as much as with a new messiah born of neither an explicit male nor female. But even asking questions, placing the painting in the attic, and setting sail, provides a touchstone of intersubjective, intergenerational thinking which disrupts the model upon which women's alienation and cooption exists. Rather than passive reproduction of masculine modes and forms, both Lily and Eve encounter the mother and have their visions realized by looking out to the horizon.

Chapter Four: Social Criticism and Mimetic Desire in *The Years* (1937), *Three Guineas* (1938), and *Nights at the Circus* (1984)

With both Woolf and Carter's previous writing, we have texts that have precisely and with great indictment drawn clear pictures of the cyclical and self-destructive nature of the patriarchal society. As I have explored, their earlier works both demonstrate the violent, sacrificial underpinnings which form the foundation of a culture that divides men and women into separate social roles and forbids, through violence both threatened and actualised, any means of communication which might engender alternate modes of being not based on hierarchy, mimetic desire, and possessive control.

In this final chapter I turn to Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938) and *The Years* (1937) and read them alongside Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984); both writers here make a move towards establishing a community of women with the power of The Society for Asking Questions, but the intrusion of masculine culture and desire disrupts and breaks apart these groups. Uniquely in their respective writers' oeuvres, foregrounding violence, these novels come to address how kinship, communication, and community is possible within a sacrificial culture through a radical restructuring of both the understanding of male/female relationships and how mimetic desire itself creates these unstable boundaries. Building on resolved and unresolved issues that are raised in their previous works, Woolf and Carter turned to paradigmatic figures of women's resistance, particularly those deeply rooted in relationships with the mother but enmeshed in an Oedipal model of social relations from which they try to disengage and rearticulate to create their own subjecthood. Both authors make an attempt to articulate a future through an engagement with, and reimagining of, the past; most importantly, they attempt to articulate a future that does not necessitate either an apocalypse or the erasure of a history of trauma, or the scapegoating and exclusion of the Other to create a homogenous utopian project.

To move to a point 'Beyond Oedipus' as Rachel Bowlby has called for us to do in her essay 'The Cronus Complex', we turn to Antigone, Oedipus's daughter. Woolf, in *Three Guineas*, prefigures this later object of feminist psychoanalysis advanced by both Bowlby

and Ettinger.[23] Carter approaches this problem more obliquely, crafting the character Fevvers out of the 19th century figure of the New Woman. Both figures, though, are born from the Oedipal model—Antigone literally, while the New Woman was in part a reactionary figure created out of male anxiety but adopted by feminist discourses: both authors use their respective counter-paradigms in order to articulate a system of radical resistance. Furthermore, by focusing on female subjects who are intimately tied to histories of abuse, rape, or incest, Woolf and Carter are situating their daughter-figures as the inheritors of an intergenerational trauma which marginalises them as much as it pushes their lives and experiences to the foreground of their cultures. As Robin Sheets writes in her analysis of Carter's fairy stories, Carter is "challenging the Oedipal models of development which privilege separation over dependence" (654). So too, I contend, is Woolf.

In these final texts, patterns of critique across Woolf and Carter's respective works are finally brought together. Both authors use the marginal identities of these paradigmatic figures to reconceive categories of womanhood and power. They also use the smaller-scale, individual social critique of desire articulated in their earlier works in order to bring together disparate threads of their narrative argument to form a wider theory of social hierarchy and its maintenance through ritualised violence. Finally, both formulate this refined critique through an engagement with history and female inheritance; mother-figures are present and inseparable from the life of both Antigone and Fevvers, and inform their sense of self as much as their understanding of their wider social obligations.

Crucially, Woolf and Carter employ strategies that disrupt and create space within conceptions of history and historiography in order to articulate a feminist presence which can be felt in the present day. They do so not only through reaching back within their literary genres to write historical novels, but also by maintaining a connection to the mother-figure (explored in the previous chapter). As Aidan Day writes of Carter, Woolf opens up history through what we would now consider to be postmodern strategies; by focusing the historical narrative on events and people who the dominant discourse has not represented as worthy of historical preservation, Woolf undermines what is considered to be accepted truth by presenting fact and fiction alongside one another (*The Rational Glass,* 168-9). But, also like Carter, Woolf uses these strategies towards a specifically antifascist and antiauthoritarian

[23] See Griselda Pollock's investigation of Ettinger's psychoanalytic discourse in 'Beyond Oedipus: Feminist Thought, Psychoanalysis, and Mythical Figurations of the Feminine'.

aesthetic and political goal.[24] There is a thread of class-based and gender-based critique running through both novels which cannot be disentangled from their authors' literary aims. Woolf and Carter use this turn to historical fiction in order to critique the respective, contemporaneous political discourses of their time. Fascism, for Woolf, and neoliberal capitalism, for Carter, are both at odds with their shared understanding of feminist socialism. Furthermore, both fascist and capitalist impulses are depicted as highly mimetic and relying on rivalry and the scapegoat mechanism in order to function, and this insight is further developed by them in order to critique utopian feminist aims. As Toril Moi exhorts, "as feminists we need to *situate* our deconstructive gestures in specific political contexts" (43). Woolf and Carter both use a lifetime of writing on desire and women's subjectivity in order to articulate an aesthetic and political critique against what they see as exemplars of mimetic rivalry in their time—and do so from the margins of women's place in mimetic desire. In doing so, they establish themselves as feminist authors necessarily performing social criticism through their fiction.

The Presence of Antigone in *The Years* (1937) and *Three Guineas* (1938)

> Even here, even now, the clamour, the uproar that infantile fixation is making is such that we can hardly hear ourselves speak; it takes the words out of our mouths; it makes us say what we have not said. As we listen to the voices we seem to hear an infant crying in the night, the black night that now covers Europe, and with no language but a cry … But it is not a new cry, it is a very old cry. Let us shut off the wireless and listen to the past […] That is the voice of Creon, the dictator. To whom Antigone, who was to have been his daughter, answered, "Not such are the laws set among men by the justice who dwells with the gods below." But she had neither capital nor force behind her […] And he shut her not in Holloway or in a concentration camp, but in a tomb. And Creon we read brought ruin on his house, and scattered the land with the bodies of the dead. It seems, Sir, as we listen to the voices of the past, as if we were looking at the photograph again, at the picture of dead bodies and ruined houses that the Spanish Government sends us almost weekly. Things repeat themselves it seems. (*Three Guineas*, 141)

That is Virginia Woolf's voice, coming to us from 1938, just as things were, as she says, repeating themselves. As we can hear in Woolf's voice coming from the past, Antigone's words speak plainly as a model of both articulable feminist resistance against tyranny and as a critical tool to uncover the role of state violence which endangers the humanity of men and women alike. These twin transgressions mark Antigone's appeal to feminist thought generally and to Woolf's own politics particularly.

René Girard, in all his minings of Greek tragedy for examples of the thematic underpinnings for his overarching theory of the scapegoat mechanism and mimetic desire, never thought to look to the power of Antigone, particularly the power Antigone had

[24] Aidan Day goes on to argue that postmodernism and feminism cannot be reconciled, as postmodernism is an inherently ahistorical and apolitical literary aesthetic (12). This will, in my chapter, be challenged.

generated in galvanising and directing feminist resistance in his own lifetime. Girard makes no comment on this beyond a few passing remarks in *Violence and the Sacred,* and he makes no effort to analyse Antigone's directives. While Christ's transgression, radical compassion, and eventual sacrifice is described at length as the first moment of a counter-violent revolution, Girard dismisses the similar passion of Antigone as irrelevant and inconsequential to a wider cultural understanding of his thesis, whatever similarities they may contain (*Things Hidden*, 244; *The Scapegoat*, 199-200). However Woolf, who understood and repudiated mimetic violence in her fiction and nonfiction alike, found Antigone's words powerful enough to include as a mantra for feminist change and a directive for cultural inclusion. This section will examine Woolf's multifaceted fascination with Antigone as well as her political use of the Sophocles text to crystallise what I view as her own ethics of compassion in the face of the explicitly fascist, masculinist mindset which, in Woolf's view, characterises the scapegoat mechanism. This will be explained in conjunction with Woolf's prognosis of a self-destructive masculine society and women's complicity within it, using feminist readings of René Girard's theories of cyclical violence. Building on my previous readings of Woolf's works, I will show how *The Years*, the last novel published in Woolf's lifetime, simultaneously summarises and broadens a lifetime of fiction dedicated to feminist cultural criticism.

The *Antigone* and feminist discourse

Antigone's seemingly endless transgressive natures—in birth, sex, and speech to name a few—have rendered her an attractive figure for feminist appropriation. She has "staked her claim on the Western feminist imaginary" (McBean, 23). Against Catherine Holland's assertion in 'After Antigone' that this turn towards the past represents an unproductive replication and repetition of a powerless situation, Söderbäck describes Antigone as "a character marked by incessant birth" (Söderbäck, 77). Similarly, Sam McBean sees her as "a figure who may be from the past, but who is not past — a figure who, it is continually iterated, as yet to exist, has yet to belong." She is a site of "not-yet", a feminist source of "untapped energy and potential", a desire "to repeat as a need to expand, to repeat with the aim of pushing outwards." This is parallel, if not one-and-the-same, with Woolf's construction of Judith Shakespeare or "the great female poet" who will, according to *A Room of One's Own,* come again if we work for her (149). Though she is a figure that exists in the

past, she has also, in Woolf's mind, yet to exist; the difficulty is, then, to join these moments together.

Antigone and all her symbolic currency is the lynchpin between *The Years* and *Three Guineas,* originally envisioned by Woolf as a single "novel-essay", and therefore once separated still sharing political and ethical aims, while implicitly conveying awareness of the singularity of fiction's powers of subversion. Both the great female poet and Antigone are images of infinite hope and possible change. So McBean's analysis of Antigone centres around feminist discourse "dragging" Antigone: "to drag Antigone is to keep hold of her failure, to keep hold of the failure of citizenship, to let it weigh the present down." This seems to challenge the move "beyond" to which feminist political and analytical thought aspires—imagining and building a better world for women—but ultimately is a future for women that pushes the possible and demands attention, remembrance, and change. Antigone is, in essence, being set up as paradigmatic.

To briefly summarise the Sophocles text: Creon—Jocasta's brother and present ruler of Thebes—refuses to allow Antigone—the daughter of Jocasta and Oedipus—to mourn her slain brother Polynecias, a traitor to Creon's power. Her other brother Etocletes, however, is given a state-sanctioned funeral. Antigone, in defiance, performs the mourning rituals to lay Polynecias to rest. When his tomb is desecrated on the order of Creon, Antigone performs the mourning ritual again, and tells Creon directly that she is responsible and will keep performing these mourning rituals as long as she is alive. Seeing her as a threat to his power, Creon has Antigone imprisoned but not executed. Antigone hangs herself. Haemon, Creon's son, climbs into the tomb with Antigone and, when Creon comes to remove him, Haemon spits in his face. Instead of leaving the tomb with his father, he stabs himself and holds the dead body of his fiancée to his chest as he dies. Creon is left with a kingdom of corpses and the hatred of his citizens for his tyrannical rule.

Typical readings of *Antigone* have cast her as the representative of family or godly law against Creon's earthly or state law; Lacan and Hegel both used this dichotomy to explain Sophocles's text (Butler, *Antigone's Claim*). This pervasive view of Antigone casts her as symbolic of the family and the transcendental laws of the gods while Creon, in dialectical opposition, represents the state. There have been many feminist challenges to his dichotomy, most notably Irigaray's (*Thinking the Difference,* 70), but I will focus on the discussion by Judith Butler. Her reading complicates both Antigone's representation as an agent of the private sphere and a symbol of familial ties. However I will be using Butler's reading in her

2000 essay *Antigone's Claim*, which reimagines Antigone's legacy and complicates this dichotomous reading significantly.

This drama neatly manifests what I have argued is the place of women within the Girardian paradigm of the scapegoat mechanism and cyclical violence. Two brothers, bearing the curse of their incestuous brother/father, murder one another in their desire for the same inimitable resource of power in Thebes. One is mourned and the other is scapegoated, and the arbitrariness of this choice is made plain within the text. While Antigone—and her sister Ismene—is encouraged to mourn Etocletes, she chooses instead to ignore the dictates of the scapegoat mechanism and instead bring Polynecias within the boundaries of the community through her symbolic act of inclusive mourning. Through this, the feminine act of mourning and remembrance becomes a radical repudiation of the violently-imposed hierarchy which forms the foundation of Creon's power. Thus the status and placement of women within Girard's theory is seen to be one of ambivalence and contradiction; while they are integral to the maintenance of the hierarchy, they are also constituted as expressly outside of it and therefore in a position from which to severely disrupt and undermine it.

Fanny Söderbäck, in her essay 'Impossible Mourning', therefore concludes that Antigone, rather than representing a pre- or ante-political space of kinship and family, instead represents the plurality represented by the Greek polis, in opposition to Creon's inherited, lonely dictatorship (69). Remembrance is an integral part of political and public life and, as I have described women's place in Girard's theory, "Woman […] as a constitutive outside […] simultaneously finds herself at the very heart of the inside. […] She inaugurates the very order that will exclude and destroy her" (74). Antigone "refuses to let the city be run as a (patriarchal) household; by transgressing the law she sets a new standard for law-making. She introduces a new model of the political, a model based on speech and action rather than tyrannical rule" (70). While the 'polis' and the political is a place of working in concert, the tyrant rules alone through violence (Söderbäck, after Arendt, 67). As such, Antigone lays down the most essential and radical aspects of a feminist methodological framework: she questions Creon's power from her marginalised position, on both a familial and institutional level, and does so through reconstituting and re-symbolizing her relationships to her brothers.

As Leonard notes, in Lacan's reading, Jocasta is ultimately to blame for the death of her own children, excusing Oedipus's incest in a paragraph (Leonard, 131). Lacan, in her reading, displays "the most classic economy of misogyny", pitting daughter against mother in a dichotomy of sexless purity versus active devourment (131). Antigone's relationship to Jocasta is dealt with more fully in Cavarero's *The Body of Antigone,* which reads the kinship

ties made explicit in the Greek text. Antigone grants burial to "the dead man born of my mother", and she beseeches her sister by referring to their shared origin of their mother's womb (49-50). In this reading, Antigone's driving force is a sense of maternal duty; however, this is complicated by the implications of Girard's theory of mimetic desire. Antigone's agency is not one directed by the will of her dead mother; her desire is not a product of mimeticism, unlike Creon's, whose inability to let go of the mimetic contamination of his anger becomes his own destruction.

Antigone's relationship to both Oedipus and Creon "binds the daughters' struggle against patriarchy with the struggle against fascism and reveals the two causes to be the same" (Swanson, 38) Antigone represents three recurrent themes within Woolf's fiction: the imposition of traditional systemic hierarchies which depend upon violence and exclusion, the private violence of patriarchal family life which takes on incestuous qualities, and the educated man's daughter's ability to resist these two forms of violence through compassion. Antigone "refuses to let the city be run as a (patriarchal) household. By transgressing the law, she sets a new standard for law-making. She introduces a new model of the political, a model based on speech and action rather than tyrannical rule" (Söderbäck, 70). Woolf is attempting to reconsitute the relationship between the brother and sister in a way that does not leave the sister under the brother's enviable power and does not send the brother to war in imagined defence of the sister—and all at the behest of the father.

> Antigone's now no longer perplexing explanation stresses that the relationality, the connectivity that is shared by the fact of being born is not the dyadic bonding of mother to child, but the shared capacity to sense and feel human connectivity, to the limits of one's own death. This is not merely the Levinasian ethic of maintenance of the humanity of the other, *but the activation of a shared humanity that cannot survive if the other's is abused*. (Pollock, 104)

As mourning reasserts the humanity of those we have lost, Antigone and Creon are expressing two distinct relationships to the past: Antigone wishes to remember and exhibit compassion towards the dead, while Creon would valorise some and execrate others. Creon's position makes him inhuman; refusing to grieve is to deny the humanity of the other and to deny the relational connection formed with the other. "If a life is not grievable, it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already the unburied, if not the unburiable" (Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34). Loss and mourning "bring to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorising fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (23).

Turning, finally, to *Antigone's Claim*: Butler's essay examines the implications of humanity within the text and its rejoinder for inclusion in the shadow of tyranny. As

Oedipus's daughter, Antigone implicitly "upsets the vocabulary of kinship that is a recondition of the human, implicitly raising the question for us of what those preconditions really must be" (82). Similarly, Creon is representative of the state-sanctioned family ties which support his succession to the throne. There is no way to disentangle 'the state' from 'kinship' or 'the family'; they support and uphold one another, and any analysis that attempts to create a distinct dichotomy will become "unstable" (5). How can Antigone represent the family when her father is also her brother? Antigone's willingness to defy Creon is not for an obligation to legally-defined kinship ties—the same ties which turned Creon, Jocasta's brother, into the dominant father of the text—but out of a love that transcends both state, family, and history.

Likewise, Creon's authoritative power is derived from the same type of kinship from which Antigone is representationally endowed; he has assumed leadership due to familial inheritance that enables his succession to power. Butler contends that the central argument in the text is one of compassion and exclusion. In Butler's words, Antigone's "predicament […] does offer an allegory for the crisis of kinship: which social arrangements can be recognised as legitimate love, and which human losses can be explicitly grieved as real and consequential loss?" (24). And while her first crime is burying her brother's body, her second crime is proclaiming the act—of having a voice, and using that voice, according to *Three Guineas*, "not to break the law, but to find the law." That is, to discover an ethics that might illuminate and address the vast difference in power between men and women. This is the true transgression of Antigone: her vocal, defiant assertion of love. That Woolf found more traction with Antigone's story than Oedipus's is an implicit critique of the Freudian readings that so dominated the intellectual circles of her day.

Virginia Woolf, Antigone, and Incest

Incest, and more broadly the imposition of male sexuality, is a pervasive theme across Woolf's work. Richard Dalloway kisses Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out*, prompting a dissociative episode that thoroughly disturbs the sheltered young woman; Peter Walsh interrupts an intimate moment between Clarissa and Sally with a sexual joke in *Mrs. Dalloway*, while Sally's vocal, suffragist politics are greeted with sexual assault at the hands of Hugh Whitbread; Shakespeare's Sister is sexually assaulted in *A Room of One's Own*, and falls pregnant, which proves fatal to both her creative progress as well as her life; Rose Pargiter is exposed to sexual violence in *The Years*, later committing acts of self-harm. Men's

sexual violence is a burden laid on women, something which women are forced to carry with them through their lives. Therefore, the first implication of moving *Beyond Oedipus* is to move beyond a state of forced familial incest inherent within the Oedipal relations between brothers and sisters.

To Woolf, Freud's Oedipus complex "is a psychological projection that attributes to the little girl the father's pathological desire to dominate the daughter, forcing her into an incestuous dependency on him" (Neverow, 68). This, in effect, transforms the daughter into the mother. While Butler describes Antigone as uniquely upsetting "the vocabulary of kinship", living in "our psychoanalytic age", as Woolf called it in her 1919 essay 'Women and Fiction', this "vocabulary of kinship" was one Woolf understood as inherently disturbed. Under Oedipal rule, our brothers will inevitably become our fathers. To quote Leonard's *Lacan, Irigaray, and Beyond* at length:

> In fact, it is a paradox of Lacan's reading that this psychoanalytic interpretation pays so little attention to the continuing cycle of the incestuous narrative of the house of Oedipus. Antigone's decision to bury her brother and accept a certain death is not just the performance of an unconditional ethics, it also represents a *rejection* of normative patriarchal structures. Not only does Antigone as a woman stand up to the authority of her guardian Creon, but her decision to die also denies generational continuity through her marriage to Haemon. Simultaneously the daughter and sister of her father, Antigone rejects the possibility of a return to normative genealogy by choosing her brother above her husband. (Leonard, 130)

In Woolf's own experience, Julia Stephen's death triggered a state of imposed familial incest which transformed the Stephen daughters into mothers so they might tend to their father's insecurities; similarly Leslie Stephen's death transformed Woolf's brothers into fathers as Woolf recounts in '22 Hyde Park Gate'.[25] This tension is, as I have already discussed, fictionalised and explored at length in *To The Lighthouse*—Antigone, then, becomes a summation of Woolf's personal and professional interest in the ontological as well as social status of woman, in which mother/wife always encroaches on the identity of sister/daughter, and there remains no space for women's articulation outside of a sexualised relationship with men.

There have been several investigations into Woolf's personal experience with incest, both physical and psychic, within the Stephens-Duckworth household. There was a trend in the early 1990′s in modernist/Woolf studies to examine the effect of childhood incest at the hands of her half-brothers, George and Gerald Duckworth, on herwork. As mentioned, accounts of their abuses are laid out plainly in '22 Hyde Park Gate', an autobiographical story

[25] "Yes, the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also" ('22 Hyde Park Gate', 177) Swanson reads the humor of this description, but does not read what I view as a tone of pity in Woolf's description of her half-brother.

given to the Bloomsbury Memoir Club in 1920, but also described earlier—and more obliquely—in Woolf's diary entry entitled 'A Terrible Tragedy in A Duckpond' in 1899. Louise DeSalvo's 1989 *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on her Life and Work* was an early, comprehensive study of this trauma and its depictions throughout her oeuvre. Other critics have followed in this vein. This discourse on Woolf sought to contextualise Woolf's relationship to violence and trauma through her personal childhood relationship with incest at the hands of her half-brother George Duckworth. Swanson, in her reading of the impact of childhood incest on Woolf's life, sees Woolf's experience specifically as one of the many vehicles for Woolf's training as the Angel in the House, and she reads Woolf's desire to kill the Angel as the desire to remove those compulsions from herself, and to resist reversion back to the conditions of existence that pertained before and which led to the trauma (82). As Woolf's brothers were "father" and "mother" and also "lover" to her and her sister, the patriarchal system to which Woolf was so opposed is one in which kinship ties are incestuous and muddled by default. Michael Leaska's reading of *The Years* in *Granite and Rainbow: The Hidden Life of Virginia Woolf* makes the contentious and mostly unsupported claim that Woolf's rendering of incestuous attraction and relationships in her texts are evidence of a personal sexual desire for her own father. But if we take Woolf's textual examination of incest as an indictment of patriarchal rule rather than personal affliction, this reading disintegrates. Instead, we should read Woolf's depiction of incest as an articulation of the greatest tragedy, of the patriarchal, oedipal existence of women. While, outside Woolf's nonfiction, Swanson gives most coverage to Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out*, this theme of incest colouring patriarchal relations is evident in her work even as late as *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, precisely through her continuing preoccupation with Antigone.

Rachel Bowlby summarises the tension of gendered Freudian living succinctly in her paper, 'The Cronus Complex': "The Freudian girl is thus caught up in the end of a tragedy that is followed by fragments of an unresolved fairy tale" (26). Whereas for boys the Oedipal complex is resolved by the realisation of sexual difference—signified primarily by presence/absence, or castration—for girls it is this recognition of their own castration that leads them to the complex itself. Bowlby picks apart the threads that bind together the castration complex and the Oedipal complex—even if the Oedipal complex is neatly resolved, the spectre of castration lingers in the substrata. It is what allows boys to "make the move denied to the girl, from family to culture—or from myth to logos" (40). Bowlby ends the paper with a tersely expressed desire to move beyond the Oedipus model, citing the increased presence of women in public life as evidence of its inability to provide an

appropriate context for female development of either a prescriptive or descriptive kind. Jessica Benjamin's *The Bonds of Love* makes an attempt to work through this problem by a dismantling of Oedipal theory. Her critique of Oedipal theory is especially helpful in articulating the ways in which Woolf undermined patriarchal thought; as Woolf was aware, "[t]he three pillars of oedipal theory—the primacy of the wish for oneness, the mother's embodiment of this regressive force, and the necessity of paternal intervention—all combine to create the paradox that the only liberation is paternal domination" (181). Therefore, to move to the point 'Beyond Oedipus' we turn to Antigone, a figure in which Woolf found a template for living after patriarchy. Woolf, in *Three Guineas*, pre-empts the later object of feminist psychoanalysis to "move beyond" Oedipus and focus instead on his daughter/sister, Antigone.

Three Guineas **(1938)**

> It appears that we can ask them to do nothing; they must follow the old road to the old end; our influence as outsiders can only be of the most indirect sort. (*Three Guineas*, 36)

Three Guineas is framed as a letter written to a charity asking for money to prevent war and secure peace and culture, alongside two answers to letters asking for money to help women enter the professions and to found a college for their education. Woolf's ideological aversion to what she sees as masculine models of society—patriotism, militarism, egotism—is expressed even in the form of her writing. Instead of writing an academic text—a method specifically denied to her due to her lack of education—she writes a letter, a feminine form, and the letters are addressed personally and in her own voice.

Woolf sees the answer to these three requests as bound up in one another, due to the power structures of the patriarchy which both disempowers women and sends men to war. So in *Three Guineas* Woolf steps beyond a room of one's own to "a mind of your own and a will of your own", stating that there is more to women's independence than money and solitude. In the answer to the questions posed to her, Woolf calls upon women's difference rather than their sameness with men in order to change and better society. While earlier critics of *Three Guineas* might call the tone "cantankerous", (Forster, 2) or the message "bitter", the politics "male-denouncing", (Proudfit, 60) Woolf simultaneously tackles the intertwined problems of women's collective lack of not just a voice, but a voice that can meaningfully be heard. *Three Guineas* indicts the self-destructive masculine society which Woolf sees as the fertile ground in which fascism grows. But far from "male-denouncing", the polemic is most concerned with women's role within these structures. This role is delineated early; women are expected,

if not to prevent war, then to "learn to feed" the men who would go on to become soldiers and waste their lives. Woman's role—her only means of influence and support—is marriage, and her only means of inclusion in society is through the birthing and "feeding" of male children and adult men's egos. Despite it being against woman's interest to support war and empire, she is both integral to its continuation and an outsider to influencing its machinations. And while "three years" is a long time to leave a letter unanswered, as it begins, the question which has been posed for the first time to a woman has "been lying without an answer even longer than that." And part of that difficulty in answering is, profoundly, language—Woolf must find a language that will not "prove impossible" to be listened to or "for us to explain". But leaving a letter so "remarkable" as this one unanswered would be worse, despite that "gulf so deeply cut between us" (1-2).

There is that same gulf between expression and understanding that Woolf has found so difficult in her previous novels. Language, like Arthur's Education Fund, is for the brothers; but the brothers, dead in war, are mute—so now the sisters must speak. There can be no direct bodily understanding—no "blood transfusion" or "memory transfusion" (7)—and so a truly communicative language must be found. At the close of the text, Woolf identifies squarely the struggle she and others have faced as that between fathers and daughters. The previous century had "opposed itself to the force of the fathers", but while tremendous gains had been made in the private sphere, "the fathers in public" still reigned; the emotion that spurs these fathers is "violence". They were Hitler, they were Mussolini, they were Franco, they were Moseley. The earlier draft collection of photographs read as "using the portraits of famous men not as icons but as mug shots of perpetrators" (Neverow, *Woolf & Communities,* 66).

How might a Society of Outsiders speak against these fathers, while refusing to participate in the mimetic escalation of violence? Woolf sees the answer in a rejection of patriotism and therefore a rejection of nationalism; Woolf points to examples from biographies of military men to show that language is the closest we may come to this blood-and-memory transfusion (7). This patriotism that is embedded within the quotations is problematised by Woolf's gendered reading. "But the educated man's sister—what does "patriotism" mean to her? Has she the same reasons for being proud of England, for loving England, for defending England? Has she been "greatly blessed" in England?" (9). Like Antigone, the educated man's sister's relationship to the state is fundamentally distinct from that of the educated man. It is important to note Woolf's use of "sister" in this passage rather than her earlier capitulation to "daughter" as in *A Room of One's Own*. Rather than

prepossessed by questions of inheritance, descent, and insularity, we are asked to see men as brothers rather than fathers. They are to be understood, not obeyed. They are "locked in", as she says. Woolf cannot understand or explicate the reasons men go to war—"we cannot understand each other because of these differences." And so the photographs of ruined houses and burned bodies become the galvanising point, the emotive understanding of horror which she brings forward. It is only when these "crude facts addressed to the eye" appear, that a common language comes forth—one of bodily emotion, of disgust, of horror, which Woolf "echoes" with the words of the male letter-writer. Even if women must use the language of men to describe their emotions, the emotions are still there as a shared point of reference between the sexes. The "picture" and the "positive emotion" of revulsion is still there—despite their radically distinct understandings of the world which diverged with their sex (12). But as Woolf delineates clearly, the options presented to the educated man's daughter is severely limited. She has no access to any of the mechanisms from which war derives its power—not even the munitions factories in which many working-class women found their wages (13). This detachment creates the space necessary to articulate a resistance against these structures.

Once again, Woolf comes immediately to the crux of the problem: not only how she might speak, as a woman, but how she might speak so that others might listen and understand. What has created this barrier, and how might this barrier be transgressed? Woolf finds a meaningful answer and paradigm in Antigone's words, and creates an argument in the form of *The Years*.

The Years (1938) and Sacrificial Culture

> We cannot make laws and religions that fit because we do not know ourselves.[26] (*The Years*, 280)

The Years chronicles the generations of the Pargiter family and their cousins from the late 19th century to the "present" of 1938; Woolf creates an assemblage of scenes across the generations of this family through the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It opens with a dying mother, a father who pays a prostitute for domestic comforts, and a cohort of children with differing relationships to their father reacting in distinct ways to their mother's declining health. Across the novel's timeline the professional meanderings and success of the sons is contrasted heavily with the poverty and aimless destitution of the women; Eleanor, the eldest,

[26] This is from a passage in the '1917' section of the novel, in which a Polish visitor, Nicholas, tries to find the words to describe their conversation before the air raid. The war, as it is, not only destroys the future but even any means of articulating a future.

spends the rest of her life taking care of her father until his death and the sale of their family home. Her cousins, Margeurite ("Maggie") and Sara, live together in shabby rooms until Maggie's marriage. Meanwhile Edward and Martin, brothers, live in comfort and professional success despite their solitary and emotionally circumscribed lives. The novel coalesces around a series of luncheons and dinner parties, before, during, and after the war, demonstrating the death and loss experienced by the Pargiter family as they move into a new century.

Regarded by contemporary critics as detached and abstract, (Moore) and by present critics as lacking the aesthetics and experimentation of her earlier, more overtly modernist novels, (Haule) *The Years* sits in a difficult position within Woolf's oeuvre. Originally conceived alongside *Three Guineas* as a "novel-essay", the texts were divided when Woolf could not reconcile what she much earlier described as "the granite and the rainbow" (*New Biography*, 235), the merging of the factual and the poetic. She later called the text "a failure" (*Writer's Diary*, 277). The text attempted to join together many seemingly disparate and disconnected forms and feelings, both to highlight their connectedness as well as to see what new forms can be accomplished; the modernist and the realist, the interior and the exterior, the personal and the political are all joined together in *The Years*. Though Emily Dalgarno calls this late work a "turn to realism", (129) in *Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Twentieth-Century British Fiction*, Judy Suh argues that Woolf's use of the conventions of the family chronicle and its realist mode is a part of "Woolf's process of reinventing modernism" (103). And as Thomas David remarks in his reading of the text, "*The Years* marks an astonishing departure from the signature interiorized, phenomenological explorations of her earlier fictions", where "Woolf figures the everyday as the scene where the historical crises of the 1930s attain legibility" (2). David persuasively argues that Woolf's use of the historical novel as a form is an attempt to disrupt our understanding of history as well as of the novel, to use "empirical attention to fact" alongside "the poetic or visionary power to see beyond it" (6). Margaret Comstock specifically links Woolf's non-authoritarian, decentered narrative structure in *The Years* to an attempt to "discourage a reader's inclination to 'march in step after a leader'" (254). What would be a linear novel then becomes a strategically scattered set of impressions—an attempt, as such, to create antifascist literary aesthetics to challenge the assumptions of the novel form.

Throughout previous chapters, we have seen how Woolf's focus on the highly constrained and gendered relationships allowed within a sacrificial culture is part of a larger criticism of the mimetic process and its inevitable turn to violence. *The Years*, read in

conjunction with *Three Guineas*, demonstrates Woolf's holistic approach to the criticism of empire and fascism, and how even the most basic interpersonal relationship is constrained by these wider political conditions. To quote Alice Wood's reading of these texts, Woolf's "critiques of patriarchy through the decade extended from rather than rejected her earlier writing practices" (29). It is not that the granite and the rainbow cannot be joined, but that one cannot be fully seen without the other.

The war's presence within the text is one of gradual dissolution experienced by the characters both from within their homes as well as in each other's company as civilians. There is a breakdown not only of social norms and the sharp division between solider and civilian—typified by Woolf's earlier rendering of Mrs. Flanders and Jacob and even Septimus and Clarissa as being almost impossibly set apart from one another—but also of aesthetic boundaries between realist and modernist. To return to David's reading, he demonstrates the non-dialectical nature of the war narrative within *The Years*; rather than being presented as a rupture of history as it is in *To The Lighthouse*, instead the First World War is a part of the flow and movement of history, albeit one that "forecloses any possibility of historical progress" (11) as "social and political antagonisms drive the movement of history but they only return in other forms" (14). The war, rather than a rupture, is merely a reification of the private tyrannies which Woolf clearly draws in *The Years* and delineates in *Three Guineas*.

Antigone in *The Years* (1938)

> "It was the light after the dark; talk after silence; the war, perhaps, removing barriers" (283).

Antigone appears as a textual presence throughout *The Years*, though a presence which has profound physical impact on her readers. The first instance in which she appears is within the context of male education. Edward, one of the Pargiter's cousins, studies Classics at Oxford and translates the *Antigone* as an undergraduate, while lusting after his cousin Kitty who also lives in Oxford. Though he approaches the text in a privileged setting, he, as well, is removed from them. "She was both of them—Antigone and Kitty; here in the book; there in the room"—but the fantasy breaks down, "For if ever a girl held herself upright, lived, laughed, and breathed, it was Kitty" (50). And when he prods the paper with his pencil—the instrument with which he's translating the Greek—the point, dramatically, breaks. His position is then sharply contrasted with Kitty's. Kitty herself is chided by her tutor for not taking advantage of her position as the daughter of a Master of college, for it must be "wonderful […] to be young and lovely and to meet brilliant men". But the famed historian

with whom Kitty is acquainted doesn't talk history to her, only provides "the damp feel of a heavy hand on her knee" (65). While Kitty's tutor is bitter and resentful of Kitty's access—similar to the bitterness displayed by Miss Kilman in *Mrs Dalloway*—that access is shown to be heavily circumscribed by the role Kitty is meant to play as the price of admission; these threats of sexual violence and possession are ones she is consistently forced to navigate. And it is only when Kitty is spoken to as if "she was nobody's daughter in particular" that she is able to articulate herself and her passion "quite shortly" (68). While the failure to see Antigone's actions as political by characters like Edward is an exclusionary tactic which removes the female characters from similar engagement, he still cannot access the text in a way that has not been predetermined by his position as a scholar in a prestigious, all-male university. Therefore, it is only Kitty who, years later, is able to recognise the fascism inherent to Rose's militant, imperialist mindset, as she feels that "Rose was wrong […] Force is always wrong" (419). And when she asks Edward if he agrees, he says nothing[27] (178).

The second direct use of the Antigone text is set years later, when Sara, another Pargiter cousin, is restless at home while her mother and sister attend a dance. Instead of studying the text as Edward does—and indeed it is his own translation and his gift to Sara—she quickly flips through scenes and images before settling on a set of visceral descriptions. "Quick quick quick with repeated jerks" vultures "struck the mouldy flesh" of the "murdered man" who has "one foot stark in the air". Antigone comes to fling "white sand over the blackened foot". "Dark clouds" come and bind Antigone "with withies". She is taken to "the estimable court of the respected ruler", picking out Edward's phrase for Creon's tyranny, contrasted with Sara's description of Antigone's grave: "There was just room for her to lie straight out. Straight out in a brick tomb, she said." And in response Sara "laid herself out" (135). We learn this is her doctor's imposition, as her mother tells her later, "What did the doctor say? lie straight, lie still, he said"[28] (140). For Sara, the Antigone text is one that is meant to be felt and, as with the photographs of ruined houses and burned bodies described in *Three Guineas*, a common language of emotion, disgust, horror may be articulated. Later, as North Pargiter, recently returned from Africa, notes offhand that "somebody had chalked a circle on the wall with a jagged line in it" (310), this is a clear reference to the symbol of the British Union of Fascists. Fascism is literally written on the wall; we need Antigone's guidance to read it.

[27] This scene is echoed earlier in the text when Martin and Kitty argue over a luncheon hosted by Eleanor. "You'll agree with me one of these days," Martin was saying. "Never! Never!" said Kitty, slapping her gloves on the table.

[28] That Creon's tyranny is linked textually to the "rest cure" brings to mind the rest cure of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which the doctors prescribing the cure are wholly condemned by the narrator as enforcers of imperialism.

This gulf is again described in the novel's final chapter, in which Eleanor and Edward briefly discuss the Antigone text and their distinct reactions. Eleanor, who is not a scholar, asks Edward about a book she read, "the one about the girl who …"—the ellipses marks not what she can't remember, but the transgression which Eleanor cannot articulate. Edward supplies the name of the book but in her effort to describe her feeling, she falls into dashes and ellipses again: "how true—how beautiful…" and then she falls silent, "as if afraid to continue." Edward, in turn, speaks a line in Greek—Antigone's words which Woolf found so meaningful—but refuses to translate them, as "it's the language". Eleanor's exclamation of joy and Edward's "sudden" jerk of his head are authentic, emotive reactions to the text, but both are afraid to fully express them in a communicable way. "They're all afraid," North thinks as he witnesses this exchange, "afraid of giving themselves away" (413). This is brought to bear on Nicholas as he tries to make a speech but is consistently interrupted. When he finally manages to drink to "the human race", in its "infancy"—a reference to the "infantile fixation"—to hope to "grow to maturity", the glass he thumps on the table instantly breaks (425). As Eleanor thinks to herself later in the evening, "We're only just beginning, she thought, to understand, here and there." Antigone, as it were, still has yet to be—but offers an enticing and hopeful bridge for future articulation (427).

However, Antigone's notable absence in the text is just as instructive as her textual presence. As in her previous work, Woolf is sceptical of women's voices and the tone behind them in *The Years* and in her scepticism of the suffragette movement as it advanced in her lifetime. In 'Suffrage and Virginia Woolf', Sowon Park establishes the literary and political context of Woolf's polemics within that of first-wave feminist discourse. Situating Woolf within a political context, she concludes that "against the backdrop of English modernists, whose politics were for the large part reactionary, Woolf's views could be considered exceptional" (125). As Park notes, *The Years* covers the same period and politics as *Night and Da*y, but the "tone that runs through this chronicle is fractured", it has lost its "idealistic and confident keynote"f (131). The nationalistic and imperialistic turn which caused the ideological rift between suffragist and suffragette campaigners is present within *The Years*'s critique of the politics of middle-class British society. Park identifies the cyclical nature of violence as typified by Rose's militant suffragism as well as her participation in the war; both, Woolf shows, are spurred by a patriarchal sense of nationalism.

Park draws connections between the suffragism of Rose Pargiter and the militancy of the WSPU campaigns led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, with their nationalism and their nativism. Against Swanson and DeSalvo's reading of Rose Pargiter as Woolf's model of

recovery or feminist role model, Rose, like Miss Kilman in *Mrs. Dalloway*, is shown as embittered, retributive, and fierce in her sense of entitlement to the fruits of empire of which she, by virtue of her sex, has been deprived. Rose plays with a knife at the dinner party and loudly proclaims how proud she is of her father's name: "Those who are violated are shown to go on to violate and dominate in their turn, demonstrating the cycle of domination that results from the system of patriarchal control." Rose's militarism and political activity as a suffragette are "a section in the continuum of violence that has fascism and militarism as its extreme" (Park, 132). This is against various readings by Quentin Bell (Rose as "heroic"), Maggie Humm ('Landscape for a Literary Feminism', 18), Laura Moss Gottlieb (*The Years: A Feminist Novel*, 225); Park sees this as a "highly specific condemnation" (134) of a type of co-option of patriarchal imperialist practices which she saw as deeply entwined with women's disempowerment. Christine Froula's description is of Rose undergoing a "heroic" change, where her childhood trauma is sublimated into a "successful career as a militant suffragette" (238); she is correct to call it "heroic", but Woolf, as I have shown, has always taken a dim view of heroism. As Woolf writes in *Three Guineas*, "Thus consciously she desired "our splendid empire"; unconsciously she desired our splendid war" (39). Or, as Woolf pairs in *The Years*, "'[Rose] smashed his window,' Martin jeered at her, 'and then she helped him to smash other people's windows'" (420) Rose's actions, either violently petitioning the government to grant suffrage to women or recruiting young men to war, are dependent on the state and on the capitulation to mimetic violence.

Furthermore, we may place this rendering of Rose Pargiter's violent politics and support of the state at war alongside Woolf's use of Delia Pargiter to depict another means by which women's desires and familial relationships are subverted in the service of empire. In 'Virginia Woolf's 'Harum-Scarum' Irish Wife: Gender and National Identity in *The Years*', Lisa Weihman draws a direct connection between matricidal desire, the worship of her father's military service, and nationalist discourse (42). The "favourite daughter" (*The Years*, 14) of the Pargiter family in her youth, Delia's mimetic rivalry with her mother leads her to develop elaborate fantasies of Charles Parnell's agitation for Irish Home Rule. "The text juxtaposes Delia's unhealthy fixation with Parnell and her father's Indian military service, suggesting that, for women in particular worshipping either father or nation are equally dangerous roads to subjectivity" (Weihman, 32). Just as Rose's rebellion in the name of militant suffrage leads to her upholding violent, fascist national identity, so Delia's rebellion against the confines of her father's home leads her to pursue an ideology that would only recreate the same conditions. Spurred to action only by mimetic desire, Delia marries an

Anglo-Irish landlord who believes Irish home rule to be a "new freedom" which is only "a good deal worse than our old slavery" (*The Years*, 399). As Weihman writes, "As Woolf presents it, Delia's search for liberty deteriorates into a search for a new master, and ultimately she fails in her bid for freedom" (44). The nationalist impulse is, at its core, a repetition of the old imperial structures. To quote Weihman at length:

> The conflation of militant nationalism with feminist and other utopian social goals is often deeply ingrained in the historical development of nationalist movements, which aspire to be not all things to all people but rather all things to one People. However, such theoretical levelling of difference is rarely carried through in the nation-state that arises from nationalist upheaval, and difference (particularly class and gender difference) typically remains the bedrock upon which the new power base within an emerging nation establishes itself. (34)

And so these relationships to fatherhood and family are the only ones allowed to exist under the present system; Rose's militarism in the service of women's suffrage is co-opted by the state to send young men to war, while Delia's rivalry with her mother and mimetic desire for her father's service in India leads her to recreate her oppressive family structure as an Anglo-Irish wife. Though Rose and Delia would appear to have taken distinct and oppositional paths in life, their desires ultimately lead them to the same place. As such, Woolf demonstrates the highly mimetic nature of nationalism. Woolf comes to use the *Antigone* as a counter-discourse within *The Years* to demonstrate this refusal of state-sanctioned family ties in the service of fascism.

Antigone's Mourning as Feminist Resistance

While Antigone's first crime is burying the body of her brother against Creon's wishes, her second crime is proclaiming the act, and using her own voice as a daughter and a sister.[29] (*Antigone* lines 482-5). And so Antigone's voice becomes the answer to the question posed for the first time to the educated man's daughter: How might we secure peace and prevent war? By joining in loving, not in hating. By allowing women's voices to be heard and understood, and articulating a clear space beyond the Oedipal model for women to affect political change. As Woolf felt that her humanity was diminished by committing violence, Antigone establishes, in Butler's words, "the question of whether there might be new grounds for communicability and for life" (*Antigone's Claim*, 55). We should instead see Antigone's willingness to defy Creon not for kinship ties or the bonds of familial obligation, but out of a love that transcends both state and family. "Her predicament, though, does offer an allegory for the crisis of kinship: which social arrangements can be recognised as legitimate love, and

[29] *Antigone*, lines 482-85.

which human losses can be explicitly grieved as real and consequential loss?" (*Antigone's Claim*, 24).

While Weihman might read *The Years* as ultimately falling into pessimism and despair at the inevitability of the rise of fascism and the promulgation of the next world war, the presence of Antigone across the text offers a means by which women's participation at the margins of a hegemonic, imperialist culture might be able to counteract the sacrificial nature of that hegemony. As Woolf writes in 'A Sketch of The Past', certain truths are "inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out loud" (150). Antigone speaks in the way Woolf wishes to speak: in the places in which she is not allowed to venture, in the way in which she demands our full attention. Both victims of incest, both inheritors of a sacrificial culture, both set to mourn brothers lost in war—Woolf uses Antigone as a catalyst for her characters' expression and as a paradigm of compassion, against whom violence may only bring ruin. With the last two texts published in her lifetime Woolf asserts that to find the law—to assert an ethics of compassion in the face of systemic injustice—is a greater transgression than to merely break the law. The revolutionary aspect of Antigone's words is to admit this corporeal vulnerability and to accept this relational tie that undoes us. Her marginal identity as a daughter, a sister, and a mourner is one that refuses to reconstitute and reconstruct the violent systems that would render her brothers dead and her own voice silent. She will not "join" in hating—she will not create these intra-human ties based on violence—but she will join in loving. Woolf recognised the radical relational politics in these words. "We can best help you to prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society". Like Antigone's grief-work which dismantles Creon's hierarchy of exclusionary, scapegoating power, Woolf's radical critique of patriarchy and tyranny can only be done from the margins. By creating space for doubt and rejection, Antigone disrupts mimetic rivalry and offers a future in which it need not be our destruction.

The 'New Woman' of *Nights at the Circus* (1984)

Nights at the Circus is considered Carter's most successful novel in her lifetime, winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction in 1984 and, later, in 2012, winner of the Best of the James Tait Black. Moving with her editor from Virago Press to Chatto & Windus, the novel found a much wider audience than her previous work. The novel is split into three sections, each labelled by geographic location. The first, London, opens with Fevvers explaining her life's story to American journalist Jack Walser; he then joins the circus in

which Fevvers is the star attraction, and journeys as a clown to St Petersburg. Finally the forward force of the novel is literally and figuratively derailed, as the train taking the troupe across Siberia is taken off its track and, through a series of odd meetings and strange reunions, Fevvers forms a proto-feminist community in the snowy wasteland with a reborn Walser.

Whereas Evelyn/Eve initiates a transformation that brings him/her outside of maleness and femaleness and towards a new horizon, Fevvers begins with her wings rather than adopting or growing them. As such, she exists in a permanently marginalised borderspace which both opens up new avenues for understanding and being but also severely restricts how she is seen and understood. Like Carter's previous works, *Nights at the Circus* explores the historically and socially constituted nature of femininity and the subjectivities that arise within its discursive and material structures. Scott Dimovitz criticises Carter for never "going anywhere new", locked as she is in "continual, repetitive subversion" with each passing text ('Angela Carter's Narrative Chiasmus', 108). However, my reading of *Nights at the Circus* will show how Carter builds on her previous critique of women and desire by engaging in a wider, more holistic critique of the mimetic qualities of womanhood, spectacle, and capitalism.

By employing postmodern literary aesthetics with her socialist, feminist politics, Carter depicts how mimetic desire can be subverted. In 'Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*: An Engaged Feminism via Subversive Postmodern Strategies', Magali Cornier Michael demonstrates the articulation of a political postmodernism, where "disruptive strategies usually associated with postmodernism" are used in *Nights at the Circus "*specifically to strengthen and further its feminist aims" (493). Similarly in 'Metafiction, Magical Realism, and Myth', Heather Johnson highlights the metafictional qualities of *Nights at the Circus*, demonstrating the blend of fact and fiction which Carter employs in order to undermine the rigid boundary between the two; by opening up history to insert Fevvers, Carter creates the space to allow for all kinds of female narratives which history has otherwise forgotten. The 'London' segment of the novel is replete with repeated references to real facts and events, newspapers articles, even entries in scientific journals. The real is used, in essence, to relay the fantastic—which in turns expands our definition of the real. It is only when Walser accepts this "alternative way of being" which is expressed through "'primitive speech'" rather than his formal, elevated, factual writing that he is accepted by Fevvers and he, in turns, accepts Fevvers for what she is (Johnson, 76). It is this positive exchange, rather than rivalrous mimesis, that engenders a true connection between them. Michael identifies the

novel as depicting desire as "a force strong enough to destroy the artificial divisions that culture establishes human beings to uphold a given hierarchical social order" (Michael, 191). While under Girard's paradigm this would typically signal a sacrificial crisis, *Nights at the Circus* demonstrates that this collapse of distinctions and hierarchies can yield new and more equitable social relations which can create greater communication across difference.

The 'New Woman' in Feminist Discourse

The New Woman category was an inherently contradictory, unstable discursive construct. In *The New Woman,* Sally Ledger tracks the public discourse and subversive, counter-discourse of the New Woman through its inception and definition in the late 19th century. As Ledger examines, even New Women writers themselves differed decisively on the relational status of the New Woman as either a proponent or opponent to questions such as motherhood and marriage. "All that was certain was that she was dangerous, a threat to the *status quo*" (10-11). Though initially a textual creation with the object of marginalising and ridiculing the New Woman concept, the image was instead co-opted and used by sympathetic feminist authors.

> For by 'naming' and thenceforward largely ridiculing and attacking the New Woman, the editors and hacks of the periodical press unwittingly prised open a discursive space for her, a space which was quickly filled by feminist textual productions sympathetic — not antagonistic — towards the claims of the New Woman and her sisters in the late nineteenth-century women's movement […] So that to this extent the 'naming' of the New Woman in 1894 was feminism's triumph, not its Armageddon. (9-10)

From its outset, the New Woman's textual construction was one intimately associated with her relationship to men and placement within male society. The New Woman's supposed sexual decadence, infidelity, and adherence to free love were the most alarming to critics in the late Victorian period. Alongside this, the New Woman's unfeminine and even androgynous habits and manners were also deeply criticised by antifeminist voices (15-7). Situated within the historical and material conditions of the women's movement at the *fin de siècle*, the New Woman became as divided as the period which produced her.

To exemplify this challenge to the patriarchal status quo, I turn to Mona Caird's essay 'Marriage', which describes the institution as socially and historically constructed and, following from that, that so too is virginity; marriage is the monopolizing of male jealousy and desire, in Caird's view. While recognising interdependent ties of love and friendship, she derides marriage as an inherent subversion of what would otherwise be free and open social ties. While her essay generated a large and widely-held debate, its central message was lost

within the ensuing controversy.[30] While marriage was heavily endorsed by professed New Women writers of their time, the dominant discourse still hinged on the New Woman being, first and foremost, a threat to marriage as an institution; the New Woman, therefore, explicitly threatened not only the dominant understanding of sexual relations and gender categories, but the co-option of marriage and motherhood as a service to a nationalist state. As Ledger describes, "The feeling was, amongst supporters of the establishment, that Britain's women urgently needed to raise up a strong British 'race' in order to sustain the nation's (supposed) supremacy, and the New Woman was construed (or constructed) as a threat to this national need" (18). The New Woman was, as well, associated with socialist organising: "The New Woman as she was constructed in the periodical press of the *fin de siècle* was repeatedly linked with socialism and the working man" (35). Eliza Lynn Linton described her polemical 'Wild Woman' precursor to the image of the New Woman as one specifically threatening to societal boundaries, including class barriers (Ardis, 24). The image of the New Woman, with its socialist inclinations, therefore becomes a challenge to the State and its liberal feminist petitioners, whose campaign for suffrage depends upon the institution of the State to succeed. But other threads of opposition to the New Woman employed Darwinist discourse, and so the counter-discourse too offered that the New Woman was, in its own way, an evolutionary step towards progress; she was "a product of evolution, as a 'higher' type" (Ledger, 23). For "she is adapting herself with marvellous rapidity to its altered conditions. And why should she not?" (Eastwood, 377).

As Ann Ardis writes: "Instead of assuming that art imitates reality and re-presents something both external and prior to the work of fiction, these authors figure desires that have never been realised before; they imagine worlds quite different from the bourgeoisie patriarchy" (Ardis, 3). Ardis goes on to argue that there is something already postmodern about the New Woman literary aesthetic; its "ideological self-consciousness, its intertextuality, and its disruption of the conventional distinction between popular culture and high art" (Ardis, 3) rendered them troubling to late Victorian culture. By positioning the New Woman within a historical and political framework, the literary figure of the New Woman entered into a debate about the production and framing of the ideological and oppressive underpinnings of the culture that created them. Critically, the New Woman became a focal point for disparate understandings of women's place within the dominant social paradigm, from marriage and relations between the sexes, to socialist agitation and the formation of

[30] For more on this, see Margaret Morganroth Gullette, 'Afterword' to Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1989).

new, non-hierarchical means of organising society beyond imperial conquest, to even evolutionary discussions of the progress of the human race.

But this emphasis on the literary aspect of the New Woman debates came at a cost: "To label something literary rather than 'real' is to quarantine it, in effect: to isolate it in a special corner of life" (Ardis, 12). In fact, Fevvers's theatrical tagline echoes the language used by contemporaneous critics denouncing the New Woman's power to interrupt or undermine bourgeois Victorian culture. The New Woman had a place "in fiction", but not "in fact".[31] (Eastwood, 375). She was, in essence, a fantastic or literary invention rather than a true agent of social change in the real world. But within *Nights at the Circus*, Fevvers's tagline opens up the possibility of her reality through that very question; by putting these two concepts into dialogue rather than falling on one side or the other, Fevvers pries open a space for herself in the same way that the antifeminist discourse in the late Victorian period allowed a counter-narrative to emerge.

Carter's use of the New Woman imagery and the literalization and de-mythologizing of its figure is both in dialogue with the spectrum of early modernist reactions to the New Woman but also a critique of the liberal humanist foundations of her depiction. While Alys Pearsall Smith claimed that the New Woman "asks […] for freedom to make out of her own life the highest than can be made, and to develop her own individuality as seems to her the wisest and the best", (450) this clarion call is one that specifically leaves behind women as a class and does not move beyond the individualism which underpins bourgeois ideology. Furthermore, by separating the New Woman from the Old, there is a disruption in the continuity of women's history towards which Carter was, at best, ambivalent, and at her most polemic, antithetical. As Sally Keenan writes: "In Fevvers, Carter creates a mediated version of this New Woman/sexual terrorist, who uses her sexuality as a device for survival, but who grows to understand that the price to be paid for playing the game according to the master's rules is ultimately annihilation" (142). The extent to which this New Woman was truly 'New' and not merely an adoption of masculine modes and desires is an avenue which Carter explores in *Nights at the Circus.*

Narcissism, the Spectacle, and Neoliberal Capitalism

While critics have read Fevvers as intrinsically outside of the social system and therefore always already a paradigm of feminist resistance, instead I will show how Fevvers

[31] Eastwood's position became more common, Ann Ardis writes, as the decade continued (Ardis, 12-13).

is initially presented as fully enmeshed within the structures of mimetic desire. I have previously touched upon Girard's explication of narcissism as distinct from Freud's, and how narcissism is another example of the mimetic process at work. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Tristessa and Eve are both formulated as narcissistic women; they create mimetic desire in others through self-desire—for Girard, narcissism is a process within the context of mimetic culture, not a pathology. As Rachel Pollard defines in *Dialogue and Desire*, Girard's understanding of narcissism is "not […] an essence but as a strategy: as desire attracts desire, to desire oneself as an object is to draw the desire of the other to oneself. The successful narcissist creates an illusion of self-love and self-sufficiency that actually depends on the desire of the other to sustain it" (105). However, that Tristessa and Eve are both manufactured women poses an intrinsic critique to the idea of narcissism as an intentional or even useful strategy for women's self-realization as subjects; Carter figures this type of narcissism as nothing more than self-objectification.[32] Furthermore, these "narcissistic strategies", Pollard goes on to explain, "are widely reflected in advertising in which the symbolic rather than the use value of goods is the selling point" (106). Fevvers, therefore, has constructed herself into a commodity under capitalism through her use of these narcissistic strategies of desire; this is contrasted heavily with Lizzie's avowed Marxism. As Mary Russo writes, the image of the *aerialiste* 'posits a realm of freedom within the everyday. For latecomers to the scene of political identity, freedom as expressed in boundless flight is still an almost irresistible image". However, it is this kind of individualist understanding of freedom and identity which is co-opted in service to patriarchy, as Russo goes on to say that "women's liberation", as so imagined, is imbricated with the history and ideology of bourgeois exceptionalism which marks off categories of irregular bodies to leave behind" (11).

As *The Passion of New Eve* is sceptical of the co-option of myth in the service of women's liberation in the 1970's, so is *Nights at the Circus* sceptical of the strain of individualism brought from 1960's discourse into neoliberal policies of the 1980's; in Carter's view, all are blind to systemic injustice and the underlying mimetic mechanisms of desire which drive these violent hierarchies forward. Jeannette Baxter makes a comparison between Fevvers and her "'Iron Maiden' corset" (15) with the 'Iron Lady' of the 1980's, Margaret Thatcher. Summarising Baxter's argument, Stoddart explains that "Like Fevvers, Thatcher combined a thirst for elevation, status and fortune with a powerful populism […] a

[32] Carter has previously investigated this idea in her short stories, particularly 'The Loves of Lady Purple' and 'Flesh and The Mirror'.

self-promoting individualist" (9-10) while Sarah Gamble writes in *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line* that, for Carter, Thatcher represented the co-option of myth and spectacle by the government, (147) something that Fevvers frequently and liberally performs for her own gain throughout the novel. Thatcherism, which simultaneously stressed individualism and free-market capitalism with an interventionism that supported the shift of wealth and power to the economic elite, used populism and exceptionalism to promote its political goals. Through the 1980's, socialist principles were abandoned in favor of free-market capitalism, which inevitably stratified the rich and poor. But the neoliberal politics which Thatcher exemplified during her time as Prime Minister made, in Carter's view, a poor bedfellow with feminist politics; with an emphasis on individual gain and capitalist accumulation of wealth, both Fevvers and Thatcher promote a style of feminism that, like the women of Beulah in *The Passion of New Eve*, could only result in the reversal of political and psychic configurations of violence and exclusion without any real, radical change. As with the male libertine of *The Sadeian Woman*—exemplified by Honeybuzzard, Finn, and Evelyn—Fevvers's female libertine takes up a relational position in which individual progress is gained at others' expense. In *Nights at the Circus*, we see this blend of Girardian narcissism embodied in Fevvers, creating a highly mimetic spectacle of herself in order to accumulate wealth through an exploitation of desire.

Therefore it is important to read and make explicit the mimetic qualities of neoliberal capitalist co-option of desire. In *The Society of The Spectacle*, Guy Debord offers a deft reading of the mimetic nature of capitalist images; his work is a critique of the capitalist process and the means by which the spectacle is employed as a reification of desire: from "being" to "having" and from "having" to "appearing" (17). Furthermore, the spectacle "is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (4). Debord's thesis links the social qualities of marketing and mass-production to the ritual processes of religion, since, as he writes, the spectacle "is the material reconstruction of the religious illusion" (20). To mesh this with Girard is to see the modes of production of the spectacle which seek to perform, just as ritual and religious congregation seek to perform, obscurant layers atop the violence and victimage it necessitates.

Fevvers as the New Woman

Fevvers's self-creation as a method of economic independence is one that is still deeply rooted in capitalist mimesis and ritual. Her lifelong apprenticeship to "being looked at"

requires a co-option of the spectacle but also a subsumption of her identity as a woman, relegated to the margins due to the presence of her wings. The spectacle may be Fevvers's own, but it is one deeply constricted by the society in which she produces it. Fevvers is "more than willing to play the part of feminine spectacle for fun and profit, but it is another thing entirely to relinquish control over that spectacle" (Robinson, 130). As such, in *Nights at the Circus*, Carter is using subversive mimetics; not an uncritical reproduction via the mirror but instead an intentional imitation which demonstrates the nature of its own reproduction and the difficulties that arise through it. While Carol Siegel might argue that "Carter gives us woman as someone other than Other, someone who is not defined by and absorbed into the patriarchal power structure", (12) I argue that Carter instead presents us with a marginalized figure who has made herself a part of the patriarchal power structure by an understanding of mimetic desire through spectacle. As the novel progresses, Carter uses Fevvers and Lizzie to "conjoin a material analysis of existing means of subject construction and a carnivalized version of female self-construction, as a way of exploring the possibility of a new female subject" (Michael, 509). It does so through a consistent analysis of desire and mimetics as it is portrayed across a wide range of institutions, from the circus to the remote tribe. By the close of the text, the origins of that desire are reached; each successive layer of spectacle is peeled away, including Fevvers's own.

'The Primal Scene' and Genealogy

> I always saw, as through a glass, darkly, what might have been my own primal scene, my own conception, the heavenly Bird in a white majesty of feathers descending with imperious desire upon the half-stunned and yet herself impassioned girl. (*Nights at the Circus*, 29)

As Fevvers explains to Walser, she, unlike your average woman, "never docked via what you might call the *normal channels*, sir, oh, dear me, no; but, just like Helen of Troy, was *hatched*." According to Richard Schmidt, by creating this genealogy for herself that is independent of the traditional family structure, Fevvers is fantasising "a beginning for herself outside the Oedipal triangle" (67); however, if we compare this use of the Leda and the Swan myth to Carter's previous depiction in *The Magic Toyshop*, Schmidt's reading falls apart. Instead of fantasising an origin that exists beyond Oedipus, Fevvers is establishing herself as existing within the understood Western canon in which rape and sexual abuse is the norm of female subjectivisation, therefore circumscribing her own ability to form equitable sexual relationships. Here Fevvers is, like Antigone, the product of, and burdened by, sexual taboo. Conversely, Michael reads the use of the Leda and the Swan myth as an ironic subversion:

"The reference to the mythical Helen, engendered by Zeus in the form of a swan and Leda, ironically links Fevvers's self-definition to the history of Western culture, as it raises her to mythic or at least fantastic proportions." Simultaneously, Fevvers "normalises the comparison […] by playfully debasing it to the level of ordinary family resemblances" (497). However, by constituting herself within the confines of the Western literary canon, Fevvers makes herself understandable to a wider audience and therefore places herself within the scope of the comprehensible.[33] By adopting the stage name of "Helen of the High Wire", (29) Fevvers demonstrates the precariousness of establishing a genealogy through a connection to myth; though figuring herself as the mythical, rivalry-inspiring Helen of Troy, she teeters on a tightrope to hold this connection aloft. Rather than formulating an origin beyond the Oedipal and beyond the structures of mimetic inheritance, Fevvers uses this connection to myth in order to place herself within the realm of the possible while also forging a connection to a mythic, unreal ontological status. This tightrope act of fact and fiction is a part of a larger operation of mimetic desire, rather than an attempt to subvert the Oedipal structure. As long as she sees her own primal scene "through a glass, darkly", she is unable to fully form a sense of herself and her history which is beyond the mythic.

Since the subject is constituted through kinship ties and the legal and social relationships which are allowed under institutions, therefore, as Michael explains, "The production of new forms of subjectivity requires new family structures and ideologies" (503). Though Fevvers's stage persona might adopt, promote, and discard a variety of origin stories—from Leda and the Swan to being constructed as a fully automated rubber toy—unlike many of Carter's previous texts, *Nights at the Circus* "represent instances of positive maternity" (Gruss, 121). Not only does Fevvers's first flight come from a push from Fevvers's foster-mother, but it is also juxtaposed with Fevvers's previous attempt where the only thing at her back was the faded, forged painting of Leda and the Swan. Contrasting Fevvers's mythic paternity with her living mother-figure, Carter demonstrates that it is interpersonal connection rather than myth which can propel the New Woman forward. Furthermore, the scene is narrated by a mixture of Lizzie and Fevvers, interpellating their speech and mixing their dialogue with dashes and interruptions as they tell the story of Fevvers's first flight. As such, Fevvers is propelled forward not only by her wings, but by the

[33] In Theo L. D'haen's essay 'Magic Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers', he connects Fevvers' use of the Leda and The Swan myth as intimately connected to Homer's *Iliad* and therefore "the oldest Western work of literature known to us". However, he notes that Fevvers eventually abandons this originary myth, finding it too constrictive for how she intends to live her life with Walser (199).

connection she shares with Lizzie—a textually intersubjective relationship which does not reproduce the same forms, as Lizzie refuses to keep Fevvers as earthbound as herself (39).

While Fevvers achieves early on the positive, communicative relationship with the past and with the non-mythologized mother, this is still complicated by Fevvers' ambivalent relationship with mimetic desire and the means by which she has found a way to operate within the sacrificial economy. While Lizzie continually insists that Fevvers is "Year One", lacking history and lacking expectation, this is repeatedly proven to be false as Fevvers encounters and adapts to the various signs and ideas she is forced to inhabit. Futhermore, for Fevvers, “the notion that nobody’s daughter walked across nowhere in the direction of nothing produced in her such vertigo she was forced to pause and take a few deep breaths” (332). Fevvers must, as it were, journey into the past in order to formulate for herself a new origin which is neither dependent on myth nor lack of history.

Fevvers' Female Spaces

Fevvers narrates her childhood to Walser as a series of female spaces which are intruded on repeatedly by men and male desire. Living in the “wholly female world” of the whorehouse, Fevvers—and Carter—acknowledge that this all-female space is an imagined utopia, but one heavily circumscribed by the economic and material conditions of Victorian London and gender relations. “Life within those walls was governed by a sweet and loving reason”, but “what followed after they put away their books was only poor girls earning a living […] we knew we only sold the simulacra. No woman would turn her belly to the trade unless pricked by economic necessity, sir” (42). When Ma Nelson’s impetuous, religious older brother takes over the estate, they “ritually anoint the walls and portals of the old place with oil” and “soak the cellars, drench the damned beds, douse the carpets”. Lizzie the housekeeper “sought for herself the last task of tidying up — she struck the match” (55). They, refugees, move on to the next part of their lives, destroyed by the Minister’s hellfire so much as their own kerosene job. They are ready, unlike Woolf, to burn down the old institutions that rely on artifice and women's exploitation; at this early stage, within a sacrificial culture there is no recourse for change that is not burning the whole house down.

Like Ma Nelson’s whorehouse, Madame Schreck’s museum of women freaks is a heavily ritualized, feminine space maintained by yet more mirrors and illusions. Schreck herself is nothing but a “sort of scarecrow of desire”, (97) a caricature of herself as she hoards

the money the women make while leading men through the subterranean cavern of her museum.

> The girls was all made to stand in stone niches cut out of the slimy walls, except for the sleeping Beauty, who remained prone, since proneness was her speciality. And there were little curtains in front and, in front of the curtains, a little lamp burning. These were her "profane altars", as she used to call them. (68)

The women are presented to the men as sacrificial victims on the altar, however a purely spectacular sacrifice; sent to the "lumber room of femininity", (78) these are women who are not considered a part of the economy of male desire, yet they find a place carved out for them in the niches of a damp basement. One woman in particular, The Wiltshire Wonder, "so diminutive in stature", is there because she would "rather show [herself] to one man at a time than to an entire theatre-full of the horrid, nasty things", for "Amongst the monsters, I am well hidden; who looks for a leaf in a forest?" (72-3). Exhibited from a young age by her mother, then sold as a novelty for birthday cakes, the Wonder is aware of the "unalterable difference" between herself and her later adoptive family. But when she finds her "natural kin", a troupe of "comic dwarves", she wants to be a part of their community. "I had a kind of vision of a world in miniature, a small, perfect, heavenly place such as you might see reflected in the eye of a wise bird. And it seemed to me that place was my home and these little men were its inhabitants, who would love me, not as a 'little woman', but as — a woman" (76). But when she joins them she is "passed from one to another, for they were brothers and believed in share and share alike. I fear they did not treat me kindly, for, although they were little, they were men" (77). Rejected from her "natural kin", she is only comforted by the lust of the men who view her in Schreck's museum, as they are "more degraded yet than I could ever be" (77). These miniature worlds, enclosed but continuously interrupted by men and men's desires, keep the women safe and keep them in a sisterhood which allows them to thrive despite their contact with the wider world.

Ultimately even this space is intruded upon by Rosencreutz and his murderous, sacrificial desires. But while he is unable to murder Fevvers to restore his own life and youth, he reenacts this desire daily in the houses of Parliament as he shouts down any attempt to give women the vote. Regardless of the efficacy of his ritualised encounter with Fevvers, he manages to sacrifice women daily in the services of the empire (90). Despite these small spaces these women have created for themselves, they are still at the whims and mercies of male desire; though they have made their livings through a narcissistic subversion of male desire, it is not without a loss of self and a clear self-objectification that this process can occur.

Woman as Mirror, Woman as Spectacle

As a spectacle, Carter demonstrates the myriad ways Fevvers uses her image to mediate, mitigate, and enflame desire. This is most obvious, and most complicated, in Fevvers's relationship with Walser across the text. Fevvers herself is an immediate presence in the text. With a flash of her "indecorous eyes" she challenges Walser to dispute the outrageous fact of her origin, as Walser sits "with his open notebook and his poised pencil" as he tries to discursively unveil her (3). But Fevvers is both master of her own gaze and how she is gazed upon by others; she "confronted herself with a grin in the mirror" and pulls off a false eyelash (3). She "fills the mirror before she fills the room", which in Michael's reading serves the double purpose of "highlighting the postmodern notion that nothing exists outside of representation or a specific context", as well as "fulfilling the feminist insistence that representation retain a firm link to the material situation" (176). She is not, as Walser would have her, a reflection of his own prejudices and suppositions. Rather, Fevvers's fiction and reality are too large to be contained by the mirror image and even by his own sense of self. The mediation of the mirror is reversed in this scene; unlike Evelyn, who witnessed Leilah's transformation in the mirror with an understanding that the fiction of her body was an imitation of his own desire, Walser feels that Fevvers's mirror image "had him effectively trapped" (5). The mirror, he understands, is a part of her deception and not his own, "he juggled with glass, notebook and pencil, surreptitiously looking for a place to stow the glass where she could not keep filling it […] Fevvers ignored his discomfiture" (5). Though aware of his emotions, she does not respond. Her indifference, and her spectacle, is what first piques Walser's desire. Though this might seem like a reversal of the mimetic desire mediated by the mirror in *The Passion of New Eve*, Girard understands this narcissism as a calculated deployment of exactly this type of desire; though Fevvers manages to hold a tight control over how she is looked at, she is still utilising the mirror.

While Walser is composed, sceptical, and interrogative, he is still diminished; he is, as of yet, hollow. Described as having no capacity for self-reflection; "he had not felt so much as one single quiver of introspection"—"none of this had altered to any great degree the invisible child inside the man" (7). Walser is there to "puff" her or "explode" her, (9) to enflame the mimetic desire that gives her this power regardless, as "Though do not think the revelation she is a hoax will finish her on the halls; far from it. If she isn't suspect, where's

the controversy? What's the news?". The dialectic is necessary to maintain her image. He understands the falsity is part of the act, but assumes it is because of an inept illusion. And yet her wings "disturbed so much that the pages of Walser's notebook ruffled over and he temporarily lost his place, had to scramble to find it again, almost displaced his composure but managed to grab tight hold of his scepticism just as it was about to blow over the ledge of the press box" (15). Fevvers is, according to Michael, "fantastic but recognisable" (179), again claiming the in-between—while Fevvers is extraordinary, outside the norm, and marginalised from the regular public and social discourses, she is still able to be recognised and able to recognise in turn. But as Robinson notes, Walser would be "threatened by Fevvers's being an anomaly—that, is, a "real" bird woman, rather than a woman masquerading as a bird-woman—is the entire representational system, based on a binary sexual difference, that Walser needs to make sense of the world" (Robinson, 123). As such, he does not see what meaning or value she could have as less than a symbolic woman (*Nights at the Circus*, 188).

But Fevvers relishes this symbolism—and relies upon it to make her living. Fevvers' life, as related by her, is a crash-course in mimetic desire, shouldering a burden of incessant symbolism put upon her by everyone from Ma Nelson to the Duke. "I was a tableau vivant from the age of seven on […] I served my apprenticeship in *being looked at*—at being the object of the eye of the beholder" (23). From Cupid to Winged Victory, Fevvers inhabits a wide range of symbolic positions which both obscures her nature as a genuine bird-woman as well as leaves her "to the mercies of the eyes of others" (42). The artificiality of these obscurant layers of meaning is apparent to Walser, though he still sees her as an implausible fiction. But the artificiality of womanhood is a topic to which Carter returns again and again, and while Eve and Tristessa both form their womanhood around artificiality, it does not make them any less susceptible to mimetic desire. This is particularly in the case of Tristessa, who becomes so wholly absorbed in the spectacle of her womanhood that she resigns herself to a glass tomb in the desert.

As such, Fevvers's position as "all woman" makes her "vulnerable to various and ingenious modes of male exploitation, variations on a metaphor of penetration, the most prevalent of which is gazing" (Robinson, 122). However Robinson puts forward the idea that Fevvers "does not, thus, position herself as masculine. She disrupts the singularity of masculine/feminine positions by representing herself as both spectacle and spectator, and forcing Walser to do the same" (125). As many other critics have noted, Fevvers' sword and Father Time clock are objects of masculine importance and symbolic of a control over her

life which she does not truly have. While Fevvers feels safe enough in the spotlight, she quickly learns that reverence can turn to victimisation in an instant.

Fevvers' visit to the Grand Duke's palace is a confrontation with her own spectacle and her own mimetic desire. While Fevvers dismisses the rich and the poor for wasting money on "bright, pretty, useless things" (217) she is sharply reminded by her foster mother that Fevvers herself is such a thing; "All you can do to earn your living is to make a show of yourself. You're doomed to that" (217). And when Fevvers approaches the Grand Duke's palace, she swiftly moves from thoughts of diamonds—ignoring the danger of the "death in the snow"—to a hypocritical sneering at the Duke's taste in equally "hard, chill surfaces" of crystal, marble, and gold (216-7). But as she comes to see herself in the ice sculpture made in her own appearance, a shining, melting mirror of her own desires, which "blazed away the thousand, thousand rainbow facets of the most magnificent parure she'd ever seen […] her fingers itched to snatch it" (218). However, even the display of automata that the Duke presents to Fevvers is tracked with a history of murder and mimetic rivalry, as each owner is killed to obtain the precious toy (221). Furthermore, the egg meant for Fevvers—replete with golden cage—is topped with "a lovely little swan, a tribute, perhaps, to her putative paternity" (225). Trying to trap her within the confines of her own spectacle and coopted myth, the Grand Duke demonstrates that is as adept as Fevvers in the strategic deployment of mimetic desire. Not only that, but he has the force of institutional power at his back. The spectacle of his wealth is used to tempt out the spectacle of her wings, but just as Fevvers "let his rooster out of the hen-coop", the Duke "flushed out Nelson's sword from its hiding place" and he snaps it in two across his knee (225). Despite Fevvers' cooption of masculinity for her own protection, the Duke strips this from her and confronts her yet again with the violence which underlines her use of spectacle.

By the end of the St. Petersburg section of the novel, Fevvers' mirror has been shattered and she has lost her sense of self, realising now how fragile this tightrope walk of self-objectification is. Without her jewels, her blonde hair, even the dye that kept her wings purple, she loses pieces of herself and come to question her own constructed subjectivity. "The young American it was who kept the whole story of the old Fevvers in his notebooks; she longed for him to tell her she was true. She longed to see herself reflected in all her remembered splendour in his grey eyes. She longed; she yearned. To no avail" (324). In the wilderness she was "so shabby that she looked like a fraud" (328). Lizzie blames the presence of Walser: "You're fading away, as if it was only always nothing but the discipline of the audience that kept you in trim" (332). Though Fevvers has managed to build a successful

career from her appearance, she recognises now that she has caged herself within the fickle and violent confines of mimetic desire.

The Ritual Spaces of *Nights at the Circus* (1984)

> The original act of violence is unique and spontaneous. Ritual sacrifices, however, are multiple, endlessly repeated. All those aspects of the original act that had escaped man's control—the choice of time and place, the selection of the victim—are now premeditated and fixed by custom. The ritual process aims at removing all element of chance and seeks to extract from the original violence some technique of cathartic appeasement. The diluted force of the sacrificial ritual cannot be attributed to imperfections in its imitative technique. After all, the rite is designed to function during periods of relative calm; as we have seen, its role is not curative, but preventive. (Girard, *Violence and The Sacred*, 114)

It is easy to read Carter's fascination with performance spaces as a formal presentation of the carnivalesque theories of the 20th century Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin. While Carter acknowledged in an interview with Lorna Sage that Bakhtin was "very fashionable in the 1980s", she admits to not reading his theories until after *Nights at the Circus* and only after her work had been compared to his critical understanding of carnival. Carter instead takes her understanding from Marcuse, as "The carnival has to stop. The whole point about the feast of fools is that things went on as they did before, after it stopped" (Carter, quoted in Sage 1992, 188). Along this vein, Marcuse sees carnival performance as a "safety valve to upturn order such that order may be maintained" (McKay, 42), whereas Bakhtin articulates a more politically liberatory method of carnival in *Rabelais and His World*.[34] Therefore to read Carter's use of carnival with a Girardian lens is to both acknowledge the ordered, licensed, curative forms of ritual and carnival as well as the emancipatory, threatening nature of carnival as a disordered and unrestrained cultural site. Rather than a dyadic, irreconcilable reading of carnival as either sites of reinscribed hegemonic power or the inverse, Girard sees carnival as a cautious use of symbolic violence which may easily erupt into real, destructive violence. While Carter acknowledges that the carnival is a circumscribed and often licensed arena, her work demonstrates this dual use and the means by which one can swiftly become the other.

This same dialectic of the nature and uses of carnival has repeated itself in feminist interpretations of carnival and its emancipatory potential for women. While Linda Hutcheon suggests in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* that the carnival and circus are "the pluralized and paradoxical metaphor for a decentered world where there is only ex-centricity" (61), Robinson counters this with the assertion that the circus, as a "marginalized world", only has

[34] In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin makes a distinction between true carnival and spectacle, where the latter involves observers and participants rather than experienced as a full participatory event.

its grounding "in relation to the centres of cultural power" (127). Robinson goes on to cite Judith Mayne's understanding of the carnival as not an inherently disruptive force to the social order, as this understanding "obscures the extent to which the carnival may exist as a safety valve, a controlled eruption that guarantees the maintenance of the existing order" (40). Mayne's reading of the film *The Blue Angel* (1930) cautions against too optimistic a reading of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, as a conflation of the carnivalesque "with female resistance to the patriarchal order may be a celebration of precisely those qualities that define women as irrelevant in patriarchal terms" (40). But Mayne's reading, as well as Mary Russo's in 'Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory', both come to the conclusion that women's use of this space may be fruitful to examine spectacles and strategies of femininity, as they inherently "destabilise the distinctions and boundaries that mark and maintain high culture and organised society" (218).

If we read Carter's *Nights at the Circus* with Girard's emphasis on carnival as an expression of the sacrificial crisis and ritual as an expression of displaced, originatory collective murder, the text opens up both the regulatory and emancipatory potential of these sites rather than closing off one or the other. Simultaneously, in *Nights at the Circus*, we are presented with multiple configurations of power and mimetic desire onto which this reading may be mapped. Carter configures the text around a series of heavily ritualised and intentionally juxtaposed marginal spaces. As the text moves across the novel, these rituals become less and less abstract and more overt in their violent and sacrificial nature. Initially far removed from collective murder, Carter crafts a series of spaces where the space between ritual, myth, and manslaughter slowly closes. This is affected through a physical remove both from sites of cultural, institutional power as well as a temporal remove to an earlier state of being. As Rachel Carroll writes in her reading of time and modernity in *Nights at the Circus*:

> The 'return' which Carter's narrative takes is not a repudiation of history. On the contrary, a return is undertaken in order to arrive in the future; it is out of this paradox that the explosive utopian energies of the narrative emerge. […] the profound longing of the backward glance denotes a desire to construct a home in the fabric of the future […] The backward glance, in this account of utopian thought and in the narrative of *Nights at the Circus*, is a safeguard against forgetfulness. It prepares the way for the future by confronting the contradictions of the past. (Carroll 2000, 193-4)

But beyond Carroll's reading is the backward glance Carter uses across the text specifically to find the origin of culture. Repeatedly, Carter makes use of highly ritualized violence and re-enactment of violent ritual as illustrative of wider societal norms. Through an exploration of carnival, Carter takes us back to an originatory ritual sacrifice, demonstrating the prevalence and centrality of these marginal spaces to a wider social cohesion and

hegemonic order. But, as Fevvers' artifice is stripped away, so are the ritual layers which obscure the violent roots of desire.

Carter's Circus

Angela Carter's fascination with performance spaces, and in particular the circus, is plain across her oeuvre. As I have already examined in *The Magic Toyshop*, these spaces in Carter's work execute a double bind of liberation from the social norms as well as a strict reification of the violence that engenders these boundaries. To use Wendy Faris's delineation, the circus is one of many "sacred enclosures" found in postmodernist texts, (Faris, 174) a space which is imbued with transformative power which threatens to spill out at any moment and stain the otherwise historically and socially informed aspect of a realist text. For Carter, it is a site of social and cultural re-enactment as much as a marginal space for gender play and hierarchical upheaval. While Melanie's mock-rape at the hands of Uncle Philip via the puppet swan occurs on the stage in *The Magic Toyshop*, so too does Finn's devastating fall from the flies which signals his radical disempowerment and eventual victimage. Melanie and Finn, therefore, meet in the middle. Similarly, when Walser enters the city, he sees "the beastly backside"; Fevvers, by contrast, is a part of the "luxurious, bright, transparent things" that, crucially, "make her blue eyes cross with greed". This divergence, and these scenes of mimetic desire, "converge only upon the brick barracks of the Imperial Circus" (120); the circus becomes a space for the mingling of these otherwise unbreachably separate spheres.

But at the same time it is a place of rarified power dynamics; the Ape-Man beats Mignon, who is coerced into adultery by the Strong Man. The ringmaster is fuelled by a love of country and capitalism. Like the bedroom of Carter's *The Sadeian Woman*, the circus ring is not an apolitical space—the people who inhabit it will always colour it with their own prejudices, power structures, and gender dynamics (*Sadeian Woman*, 6). While it is a place that signals a drastic loss of difference, at the same time it is a distinct reification of an existing power structure. As such, Carter acknowledges that even the fantasy and the carnivalesque is always situated within the material and the historical. And while a Bakhtinian reading would instruct that the destabilization of norms and creation of extraordinary situations in which violation, scandal, and breaching of boundaries would become a site of experiment and knowledge,[35] Carter demonstrates that the carnival must end, and ultimately it ends in a violent reassertion of norms.

[35] See Bahktin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.*

This process is best exemplified in the text by the clowns. They are “the very image of Christ” and “The despised and rejected, the scapegoat upon whose stooped shoulders is heaped the fury of the mob, the object and yet — yet! also he is the *subject* of laughter. For what we are, we have *chosen* to be” (138). Existing as they are in this marginal position, they have found a necessary role in the existing social order. Just like Fevvers, they engage in the spectacle in order to maintain some control over the violent processes of mimetic desire. They exist in the atmosphere of “a prison or a madhouse” where they maintain “a willed and terrible suspension of being” (134). The Master Clown, Buffo, reigns as an upended Christ-figure who exists sacramentally during mealtimes and presides in a process of “convulsive self-dismemberment” during performances (135). He performs a ritual self-sacrifice and resurrection inside the circus ring (137). As Christ, he is eternally reborn to bear the sins of the community. As such, the clown is a scapegoated figure, as it carries the victimary signs required in Girard’s explication of his mechanism. As Buffo goes on, the clowns are there because they have been coerced into clowning, there is “no element of the *voluntary* in clowning” (137). They fully embody the role of the surrogate victim, and when they dance it is “beastly, obscene violence they mimed” (144) and it is a dance “of regression; celebration of the primal slime” (145). It is intentional that Walser's induction as a member of Clown Alley is rife with this image of collective, originary murder: Walser’s first clowning act is a stoning, as “all the clowns followed suit, whipping eggs out of various parts of their clothing and anatomies, and pelted Walser until egg liquor streamed down his face, blinding him” (178). Walser “lashed out”, not in on the joke, as the clowns laugh at him while driving him “round the ring with blows and mocking cries” (178).

Carter positions the clowns specifically as surrogate victims within the gigantic, integral sacred space within the state-sanctioned Imperial Circus. Therefore, within the "brick barracks" of this space they recognise that any sacrificial crisis they re-enact must also be quelled through their ritualised clowning.

> A band of irregulars, permitted the most ferocious piracies as long as, just so long as, they maintain the bizarrerie of their apperance, so that their violent exposition of manners stays on the safe side of terror […] part, at least, of this laughter comes from the successful suppression of fear […] So then you’d known, you’d seen the proof, that things would always be as they had always been; that nothing came of catastrophe; that chaos invoked stasis. (176-7)

Here, Carter acknowledges the limitations of the carnivalesque as a truly radical space. Instead, it is a space imbued with sublimated violence. When the tigers perform, their trainer knows that “it would come to them, always with a fresh surprise no matter how often they performed, that they did not obey in freedom but had exchanged one cage for a larger cage.

Then, for just one unprotected minute, they pondered the mystery of their obedience and were astonished by it."[36] (173). This possibility is highlighted by the gun kept on top of the piano, "Just in case" (174). Their pact, and the gun, is to "prevent hostilities, not to promote amity" (174). As such, even the illusion of "*intentional* Bedlam" (208) has the heightened possibility of breaking into actualized Bedlam. Though Buffo is successfully carted away to the madhouse without breaking the audience's veneer of disbelief, the Princess's murder of one of her performing tigers comes as a greater shock. However, even this is cast in sacrificial terms, as the audience makes "Such a sound as the Roman audience must have made when a lion ate a Christian" (209). Such roles, despite their illusions, are still enforced by a real threat of violence. Despite the clowns attempting to "teach the little children the *truth* about the filthy ways of the filthy world" (141), the actuality of the space as a licensed place for this kind of rarification and upheaval is that "the circus could absorb madness and slaughter into itself" (211). As a ritualized space, the circus is unable to reach the heart of the sacrificial paradigm.

Carter's Panopticon

The only passage of the text that does not concern itself with the immediate presence of Fevvers or Walser is a section within 'Siberia' dealing with the incarceration of women who have murdered their husbands. In this part of the novel, both the ring of the panopticon and the ring at the centre of the circus are presenting the same structures of power; indeed, they are mirrors of one another, as the clowns of the circus ring exist within "a prison or a madhouse" (134). These are places where the social boundaries are broken down and simultaneously reasserted—where the mimetic nature of desire and violence is rarified and reinscribed. While the panopticon is an overt reference to Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Carter upends the prison system by focusing on the highly mimetic dialectic between the warden and the prisoners.

Crucially, the warden—"Countess P."—is a murderer herself, acknowledging that others have committed the same crime "with less success". While the economically deprived women she incarcerates murder their husbands to defend themselves and their humanity, Countess P. murders her husband not out of a physical or psychic necessity, but because "her husband's wealth provoked her greed" (246-7). But even if she positions herself as their captor, she places herself in a comparable situation to her prisoners, "for the price she paid for her hypothetical proxy repentance was her own incarceration, trapped as securely in her

[36] This obedience has echoes of Carter's investigation of the panopticon, which follows shortly.

watchtower by the exercise of her power as its objects were in their cells" (251). Similarly, even the women employed as security are imprisoned in the panopticon; of everyone within this artificial power structure, the only ones cognisant of their incarceration are the prisoners (251). In Carter's panopticon, it isn't the threat of surveillance that renders the women into docility through the exercise of power; rather it is the desire to imitate their captor and stare right back; the Countess hopes, in turn, to imitate their salvation (249). They are trapped within a "reciprocal observing" (252), a mimetic bind that keeps them in the endless stasis of the prison.

But when the Countess places them, as Carter explains, outside of the realms of justice, (251) they are also rendered prone to escalation of mimetic desire—there exists no mechanism to prevent the breakdown of these boundaries. And so they do, but instead of a violent act of mimetic rivalry, the boundaries are broken through an act of reciprocal compassion. Olga Alexandrovna, whose mother makes food for the clowns in St Petersburg, "had come to the obvious conclusion that the guards were as much the victims of the place as she" (253). And so, the spectacular qualities of speech and sight denied, "she might be able to touch one of these fellow-prisoners" (253).

When the prisoner and the warden see, as it were, face to face for the first time—locking eyes over their forbidden touch—the walls of the panopticon begin to crumble under the subversion caused by this truly reciprocal gaze, for "they saw one another clearly" (253) and "Desire […] leapt across the great divide between the guards and the guarded" (254). Rather than rivalrous, their desire is communicable and therefore reciprocal; rather than escalating acts of violence, there are escalating acts of admiration and love through this recognition. "And if the guards were all subverted to the inmates' humanity through look, caress, word, image, then so did the inmates wake up to the knowledge that, on either side of their own wedge-shaped cubes of space, lived other women just as vividly alive as themselves" (255). As demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis, this recognition instigates their responsibility to respond—to see their humanity despite the violently-maintained boundary that separates them.

This dissolution of boundaries comes with a threat of violence, but when they rise up and turn "towards the Countess in one great, united look of accusation", they don't descend to collective murder. Instead, "They left the Countess secured in her observatory with nothing to observe any longer but the spectre of her own crime" (256). Like Creon, she is left with her kingdom of corpses, the only thing she has left to survey being the women buried underneath

the flagstones of the yard, and the memory of the Duchess's own violence based in mimetic desire.

The women of the panopticon leave to "found a primitive Utopia in the vastness round them […] a blank sheet of fresh paper on which they could inscribe whatever future they wished" (256-7). This Utopia—ahistorical, apolitical—is one that can only exist after a catastrophe, and so they stumble on the remains of another; as soon as they set off, they find the crashed train of the Circus and the inhabitants of the tundra. While the utopian impulse of these women is founded on love, it is also founded on exclusion and an intentional erasure of history. The remains of the past are still with them, though they are free to discard it, as they discard the Father Time figurine from Fevvers's broken clock (261). They make a conscious choice to discard time and their own history, as they abandon the children they left behind when they were incarcerated in order to look towards the blank state of the future. But how clean this future slate is challenged by Lizzie; when Fevvers and Lizzie hear word of their plan, Lizzie scoffs, "What'll they do with the boy babies?" (284).

While not as overtly enmeshed in the sacrificial system as Beulah in *The Passion of New Eve*, Lizzie's question makes the exclusionary practice of their utopia plain. She asks derisively if the boy babies will be fed to the female polar bears to keep their community free from any masculine stain. While the inhabitants of the panopticon have freed themselves from the false barriers of their imprisonment, they have not freed themselves of the sacrificial nature of a seemingly utopian, closed community.

Carter's Primitive Tribe

The final and most explicit interrogation of ritual structures and their governance over our lives is the Siberian village, led by the Shaman, in which Fevvers and Lizzie reclaim themselves as well as Walser. The tribe ritually sacrifices a bear "for the best" (305) and in a "perpetually recurring cycle of return" (306). Specifically, Carter identifies that these originating rules, myths, and rituals are designed in response to material issues, whether they be scarcity, violence, or death; "The harder the bargain men must strike with nature to survive, the more rules they're likely to have amongst themselves to keep them all in order" (333). As such, the sacrificial nature of both the exclusion of the new mother and the death of the bear in the god-hut must be read as the primal origin of both the panopticon and the circus, all with their set of rules and engagement which is crucial to the function of their hierarchical society.

While the ritual church of the village is “Custom-built […] for sacrifices, the wild church was intended to impress, and was impressive […] Lizzie and Fevvers owed their capcity for survival to a refusal to be impressed by their surroundings” (340-1). Lizzie is able to discern from “traces of old blood, of fur and feathers" that the place is a site of ritual. “Typical church atmosphere”, (340) as she says derisively. That Lizzie sees the church as identical to other religious and sacred spaces within the text is both a humorous indictment of the ritual nature of the other sacred spaces encountered as well as an elevation of the primitive ritual as a central and important necessity to the functioning of their society. This animal sacrifice must also be viewed as a part of the scapegoating mechanism, as Girard states in *Violence and The Sacred*, there is "no essential difference" (11). Furthermore, that this sacrifice occurs within the closed, insular community of the village just as they have placed a new mother and her infant child beyond their borders to escape evil spirits demonstrates that the distinction between woman and animal in terms of otherness is not one the tribe entertains.

The ritual exclusion and death of both animal and woman is highlighted especially when Fevvers and Lizzie enter the god-hut where the bear is to be sacrificed and, carrying the severely ill new mother, place her on the altar to rest. The Shaman assumes they intend to sacrifice the mother and baby instead of the bear (340-3). Instead, Lizzie and Fevvers upset the sacrificial order towards the aim of creating a future in which neither bear, nor woman, need be killed for the sake of the community. As such, when they arrive, Lizzie and Fevvers interrupt the sacrifice and topple the idols “in a domino effect of comprehensive desecration” (341). In a bathetic display of sacrilege, once the suspension of belief has been toppled in one, the rest naturally fall to pieces. When the god-hut has been divested of its power, Fevvers refreshes her spirits and the wind "blew through the god-hut, blowing away the drugged perfumes and smells of old blood” (344). Both the mother and bear are saved from the exclusionary, sacrificial practices of the tribe, and the future presents itself with Fevvers bringing them forward.

Rachel Carroll writes of *Nights at the Circus* that both "the obsolescence of the past and the assumed course of the future are called into question. Encounters with the archaic and the 'primitive' transform endings by exploding 'origins'” (Carroll 2000, 188). Carroll goes on to assert that Carter's narrative is an attempt to "exorcise… the ghosts of past oppression", and it is to this end that "the past is revisited” (197). However, history does not haunt the novel so much as create the textual space in which these meetings become possible. As *Nights at the Circus* is an historical novel, the past is being reworked to situate a positive change. These

ruptures with the past necessitate a return but not to exorcise them so much as rearticulate a relationship with them which is not informed by repetitive trauma but is instead forward-facing, towards a future in which the past does not haunt, but informs.

Spectacle & Ritual

Carter examines the individual as well as the communal aspects of sacrificial culture and mimetic desire. Examining the roots of these issues, we converge on Walser and Fevvers as well as the communal sacrifice ritual which she interrupts and then banishes. It is at this moment of convergence that, the idols smashed, her body unadorned, she reasserts her body against both the Shaman's attempt to turn her "from a woman into an idea" and her sense of self "trapped forever in the reflection in Walser's eyes" (343-4). The questions he asks her—"What is your name? Have you a soul? Can you love?"—are met with joy. She is "big enough to crack the roof of the god-hut" (345). Rather than an obsession with unveiling or exploding her by interrogating her origins and her stage presence, Walser comes to ask communicative questions which open up new possibilities for understanding.

In Michael's reading, the novel ends on a "utopian rather than essentialist reformulation of desire", in which love and desire carry "liberatory potential" rather than refracted through a lens of domination and ownership (185). As Sally Ledger has investigated, the difficulties of feminist activism to find traction and common ground with political movements is a point of contention, and only in specifically utopian writings of the period does this difficulty become opportunity for change and mutual growth (39). Utopianism recognises that a radical restructuring of the interpersonal relationships and the conditions under which they are allowed to form must occur for feminist goals to succeed; it is a process which acknowledges and tackles the individual as well as the communal processes which create culture and boundaries.

However, while Carter is attempting to envision a future in which the distinctions and borders may be collapsed without the precipitation of a sacrificial crisis, she is sceptical of the exclusionary practices which inevitably follow a utopian project. Furthermore, Carter is critical of the liberal feminist position, typified by Thatcher, which has women adopting and developing mimetic desire for their own personal gain, while Fevvers hopes that one day "all the women will have wings, the same as I"—or, more specifically, the women "tied hand and foot with the grisly bonds of ritual" will be free of their bonds at some future time. And while Lizzie implores her to "improve your analysis", Fevvers goes on, excited for a future where

she is “no longer an imagined fiction but plain fact” (339). With this passage, Carter’s work brings together “more than one strand of feminism, an engaged Marxist feminism and a subversive utopian feminism” (Michael, 492), which is to place women within their historical and political realities and develop women’s subjectivity while also theorizing and building alternate modes of being and relations (Michael, 500-1). Carter's praxis is not an abandonment or exorcism of history, but rather a reconfiguration which may allow for a positive relationship and understanding in order to envision a future which is not bound by cycles of violence.

Woolf & Carter: A Shared Politics

> The very idea of modernity is closely correlated with the principle that it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking. […] We now suspect that this 'rupture' is in fact a way of forgetting or repressing the past, that is, repeating and not surpassing it. (Lyotard, 48)

With *The Years*, *Three Guineas*, and *Nights at the Circus*, Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter both come to articulate a wider political critique than their earlier novels achieve. By centring mimetic desire as the process by which relationships are produced and social hierarchies formed, Woolf and Carter establish and utilize that hermeneutics of suspicion which Girard’s theory engenders, in which fascism and liberal capitalism, respectively, can be brought under the same critical lens with which they also view the interpersonal relationships that form between men and women under these circumstances. By widening their critique, Woolf and Carter demonstrate the devastating social effects of mimetic desire and the means by which it is reproduced on institutional levels. In addition to demonstrating the wide range of mimetic desire across both public and private life, Woolf and Carter both concern themselves with the means by which women adopt and enforce sacrificial culture by reflecting or sublimating masculine desire. Both Woolf and Carter show how women function within mimetic desire from the in-between space of marginal and integral, and how a fully realized female subjectivity in this space is impossible.

Therefore, Woolf and Carter attempt a “backward glance”, critically assessing history and historiography through their fiction and opening up the necessary space to allow an alternate future to be imagined. Woolf and Carter achieve this, as I have shown, through a comparable literary strategy which engages a politically and historically aware use of postmodern techniques. ‘To Pargit’ is to join together, whereas *bricolage* comes from the French for fixing objects from pieces of other objects. Claude Levi-Strauss’s use of the word

was to demonstrate how myth turns social discourse into ideology;[37] to make meaning from the disparate material and social practices which constrain our lives. Both Woolf and Carter are attempting to demonstrate the seams within the structures that create their characters and, by extension, ourselves. Contrasting, transposing, and juxtaposing scenes, characters, and literary influence, both writers attempt to build new, more equitable structures from the old. Therefore, Jago Morrison's reading of Carter as playing with history as a "conglomerated inheritance of meanings" (155) is one that could easily be applied to Woolf at this late stage of her work. By tracing the present moment from the symbols and influences of the past, both Woolf and Carter join together what would otherwise be disparate and disjointed histories where figures like Fevvers and Antigone could easily fall through the cracks.

Through these critiques, Woolf and Carter share an ambivalent relationship towards the concept of utopia and utopianism. Fascism and neoliberal capitalism both offer utopian futures, provided the border between inside/outside is maintained. While both political ideologies court women into their systems, Woolf and Carter show how both use mimetic desire to ultimately recreate the role women have maintained in previous systems of community and kinship.

As Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*, the female poet may yet come to be: "Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. […] I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while" (149). Later, she would write that human beings,"though now shreds and patches", might soon "be brought to a state of greater completeness" (Monks House Papers B.16 b). But it's not, as Carter articulates through the materialist feminist Lizzie in *Nights at the Circus*, "the human "soul" that must be forged on the anvil of history, but the anvil itself must be changed in order to change humanity" (283). Likewise, to use Sam McBean's reading of the place of Antigone in feminist consciousness, while the mother and the great female poet of Woolf's works are in *the past*, she is not yet *past*, she is *yet to be* (35). She can only come if we strive forward. One day all women may have wings, as Fevvers says, hopeful and daydreaming—but only if we improve our analysis first.

[37] See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (1962), London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1974, and *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, Harmondsworth Penguin, 1972.

Conclusion

By situating desire as determined by the arrangement of social forces and networks which circumscribe our position within society, family, and the world, René Girard opened up an immediate and fascinating avenue into understanding the ways desire is experienced along gendered lines. Furthermore, by articulating violence as a structural result of desire within social contexts, Girard allowed for the development of a radical critique of hierarchical institutions that might be made from the margins. While Girard's own work failed to recognise its own entailments in this area, by examining his work in concert with that of Woolf and Carter, we come to see the complex social relations and formulations of desire and violence depicted in the writings of these feminist authors, and we see more clearly too the gaps in Girard's theses as they relate to gender difference and the failure to perceive the structural, foundational oppression of women throughout history. Furthermore, we can see how two authors who are considered icons of distinct and divergent literary periods share similar themes and political concerns throughout their work, moving in a shared trajectory as they encounter and resolve specific problems relating to gender relations, desire, and violence.

Across these chapters, I have situated each author in a larger body of extant criticism. Though there have been previous feminist criticisms of René Girard, most notably along psychoanalytic or theological lines, there has been no attempt to make a critique of Girard along gendered lines using the same methodology and tools with which he crafted his original thesis, i.e., through a study of works of literature. With the notable exception of William Johnsen, there has heretofore been no reading of Woolf or Carter using Girard’s hermeneutics of desire. Similarly, few critics have tried to pair these two authors in any depth but the fascinating parallels in their themes, trajectories, and politics emerges in reading them together through Girard’s theory of mimetic desire. Woolf and Carter both wrote during periods of radical cultural change and social and political upheaval. Both witnessed social and political revolutionary possibility succumbing to the reiterated forces of violence, sacrifice, and women's subjugation reasserted under different guises. What could have been a moment of necessary change which might signal a promised liberatory goal of women's sexual and social freedom, would eventually close into the same stultifying marginalization which only repeated the same cyclical violence. As such, their work moves to uncover these social forces which inexorably draw these systems of violence and desire back to the same

moments of crisis. In doing so, they form a radical critique of mimetic desire and women's role within this paradigm. Both Woolf and Carter lay bare the violent machinations of the social order. Through the questioning and peeling back of ritual structures, ceremony, and the role women play in social cohesion, they interrogate these practices and the costs of a social unity founded not in reciprocity but unequal appropriation. Hierarchy and sacrifice are re-evaluated as the core concepts that engender social meaning and interpersonal relationships. Woolf and Carter are both acutely aware of the symbols that mediate our lives; how they inscribe and circumscribe both thought and body. They demonstrate, through the clarity of their fictional representations, the role of women as it operates within Girard's thesis as mourner and mirror. In their work, this role is reconstructed as a space of intense agency, where the liminal and reflective space afforded women is able to be subverted for political and social change.

In this thesis, I have worked through four distinct problems which have arisen while reading Girard's theses through a gendered lens, and have given explanations and alternatives which Woolf and Carter offer when they are read in this light. Far from uninfluenced by the machinations of mimetic desire, or used as objects of rivalry between male subjects, women present in Woolf and Carter's fiction as inhabiting distinct and integral roles imagined within the terms of Girard's paradigm. At once marginal and central, the maintenance of society before and after a sacrificial crisis falls to those left behind to mourn and reconstruct these civilizations. Furthermore, women are used as extensions and ratifications of men's desire and are used to resolve and maintain rivalries. In addition to this, women's roles are violently imposed upon them and eclipse a sense of self as a desiring subject.

I began in my first chapter with a general overview of the mimetic process as it is depicted through the male characters and masculine culture in *Jacob's Room* and *Shadow Dance*. By illuminating the processes and violent underpinnings of the inheritance of empire in the former and mimetic rivalry in the latter, Woolf and Carter demonstrate a keen understanding of the means by which desire is a highly mimetic and infinitely destructive cultural process. They use this understanding to depict how women are used by the male characters to remember, reflect, and repeat male desire and male society. While these two early novels are unable to articulate any kind of resistance to the violent impulses of mimetic desire. While certain female characters are able to witness or testify to these structures, they are ultimately left behind to clean up and maintain the same structures which disempowered them.

However, when we move on to *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Magic Toyshop*, there is an attempt at communicating across gender lines and over violently-maintained structural barriers which hints at awareness of these structures and compassion for their victims. Both Melanie and Clarissa are shown to have a severely limited sense of self which is mediated by a purposefully-constructed self-image deliberately created within the mirror. Their understanding of themselves is socially situated and circumscribed by the familial context which these characters inhabit. But as each text progresses, opportunities for mutual understanding and intersubjective social relations emerge. Melanie and Finn are able to form a relationship based on compassion and recognition despite the imposition of the family structure and the stage performance they are forced to inhabit. Clarissa, though constrained by her role as hostess, is able to mourn the death of Septimus Smith and understand at least obliquely the purpose of his suicide. Both texts, however, depict these revelations as intensely focused and unavailable for dissemination into a wider context or critique. Both may be seen to end on a simple reassertion of the status quo, despite the deeply radical change which is promised to the characters.

This is accomplished, however, in *To The Lighthouse* and *The Passion of New Eve*, which recreates Oedipal family structures in order to interrogate and traverse them so that new social relations may occur without a violent hierarchy to impose them. As both novels focus on the progression of a daughter character—Lily Briscoe and Evelyn/Eve—the texts rearticulate the relationship to the past through an encounter with a heavily mythologized, heavily ritualized, immaterial mother-figure which both draws and repulses them. However, through a creative encounter with the mother, both characters are able to resuscitate and rearticulate their familial and wider social context in which becoming-woman need not be the same as becoming-mother within a patriarchal household. This critique is developed in later works, *The Years*, *Three Guineas*, and *Nights at The Circus.* This final chapter therefore re-examines Girard's explication of how, in his reading, the Oedipus myth "is the proposition that all masculine relationships are based on reciprocal acts of violence" (*Violence and The Sacred*, 53). Thus a project of feminist mimetics would be to move beyond Oedipus, and so Woolf uses the figure of Antigone and Carter constructs her character Fevvers from the New Woman discourse of the 19th century, in order to move beyond this canonical figure of psychoanalysis. Both authors manage to craft a widened political critique by looking back through history and recovering a means of political and social resistance which disrupts and reformulates the familial structure so that non-hierarchical, non-paradigmatic social relations may form based on radical compassion and community. However, both authors also use this

to criticize utopian impulses which are, more often than not, based on the same violent exclusion which typifies sacrificial societies.

Though both authors begin from an explicitly marginal position and use that position in order to criticize what they see as foundational to social inequality, they do so from distinct but compatible understandings of the role of women within the mimetic paradigm. Initially articulating the same unresolved tension which Girard explicates within his readings, both come to formulate a tentative understanding of what women's role is within the sacrificial crisis. While Carter sees the reflective, marginal position of the mirror and the spectacle to be a fruitful mode of transformative resistance within her work, Woolf conversely locates the mourner as an image and feminine practice which has a unique position as the place of reformulation and inclusion. Woolf's use of mourning is intimately tied with her modernist aesthetics and her historical moment, in which the mass death incurred by the Great War led to a period of public mourning in the service of social unity and nationalist sentiment. For Woolf, mourning was a means to both articulate a relationship to the past and to social and literary inheritance as well as a means to recognise and affirm the humanity of the other. Reading her work alongside Butler's *Precarious Life* and *Antigone's Claim* shows how intimately Woolf's use of mourning is tied up with her understanding of communication and history. However, for Carter, the postmodern preoccupation with pastiche, representation, and commodification drew her to an examination of these processes in the shaping of women's subjectivity under an increasingly neoliberal economic and social system. Carter's use of images strongly reflects Debord's understanding of spectacle as a mediator for relationships between people; Carter's particular use of performance spaces as sites of ritual re-enactment of cultural violence as well as a modern application of Plato's cave demonstrates an awareness of how desire is constructed within social contexts. Though both Woolf and Carter have been studied for their expressions of mourning and spectacle, respectively, they have not been studied for how these expressions are specifically represented as political praxes used to articulate the violence and hierarchy of a sacrificial society.

In this thesis, I have simultaneously paid attention to the thematic and political evolution across the respective bodies of work of each writer as well as to the idiosyncrasies of their formal literary techniques as they developed them in conjunction with their overt political aims. Within mainstream literary studies, both Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter are seen as established icons of modernist and postmodernist literary movements, respectively. However, to read them as such is to elide their specific and integral feminist politics which

distinguish them from their contemporaneous literary movements. As I have shown across this thesis, Woolf departed from her contemporaries when modernist literary figures became invested in myth-making, fascism, or apolitical aesthetics. Furthermore, her later understanding of the Great War not as a rupture but as an expression of cyclical violence engendered by a sacrificial community puts her at odds with previous modernist depictions of the war as a rupture or break from the past which could engender an entirely new, unencumbered literary canvas or a utopian society built up on a new blank canvas. Similarly, Carter's engagement with explicitly postmodern literary techniques and aims was consistently circumscribed by an avowed materialism and her personal socialist political beliefs. While the liberal humanist definition of a discrete and autonomous self is deeply questioned within postmodernism in general and in Carter's work specifically, she does so always with an understanding of the political and social position of women within this discourse.

However, neither Woolf nor Carter were subsequently uncritically adopted into feminist discourse. The debates over Woolf's work in the 1970s and 80s demonstrated a deeply ambivalent attitude towards her as a woman-centred writer. Similarly, feminist approaches to postmodernism in the 1990s were tepid and, at times, contentious.[38] But these authors also share a contentious relationship with the feminist movements of their respective moments. Woolf's criticism of the sacrificial impulses of the suffragette agitators as well as the turn to fascism demonstrated by women's rights activists associated with Futurism and the First Wave feminist movement made her deeply critical of any social movement informed by violence and exclusion. In particular, she rejected the turn from suffrage campaigner to wartime recruiter exemplified by characters like Rose Pargiter. A feminist movement in service to empire or fascism was something of which Woolf was deeply critical throughout her work. Similarly Carter's engagement with the roots of desire within oppression ran explicitly counter to the 1970s feminist activism which turned to mythmaking and censorship to enact its goals. These parallels between Woolf and Carter run deeply through their work and through their criticism of mimetic desire.

The scope of my thesis is, admittedly, narrow, in that it seeks to lay down a methodology which future studies might consolidate and expand. But in relation even to the authors approached here, Carter's fairy stories or her deliberate reconfiguration of the folk tale for feminist aims are not a focus of my analysis. Neither do I return to Woolf's *Orlando* or examine its particular gender politics or aesthetics of violence and desire. *The Waves*, as

[38] See Waugh, Patricia. *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*. London: Routledge, 1989.

well, has been neglected, despite Girard's specific praise of this novel as "the ultimate and supreme novel […] a quintessentially mimetic novel" and "essential to an understanding of what intensely troubled Virginia Woolf herself" (Golsan, 134). Similarly, I have not brought either *Heroes and Villains* or *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* into my purview beyond a brief mention of both across the thesis. My intention with this project was to perform a comparative study of Woolf and Carter as much as to question Girard's androcentrism; as such, certain avenues of commonality between Woolf and Carter and between Woolf and Girard or Carter and Girard have been, regrettably, unexamined, for the sake of space and symmetry. Furthermore, were this thesis not a specific reading of literary texts and instead a philosophical or anthropological study of Girard and gender, much more could be said. That is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis within my area of literary studies but I hope to have laid a foundation for further studies of this kind.

My analysis ends in 1984 with *Nights at The Circus*, published over thirty years ago. The shift in political, literary, and social discourse from the 1980s to the present day has been profound. And yet, in many ways, the parallels persist. As Virginia Woolf witnessed the rise of fascist politics and its appeal to feminist activists of her time, so did Angela Carter observe the rise of neoliberalism within political and economic thought, and its co-option of feminism as a commodity for use by women in their individualistic pursuit of desire – of career advancement or personal ambition, for example- without regard to any attempt to heal or overcome for the many the divisions and boundaries which are the root causes of inequality. In the last five years, the propagation of neoliberal policies has created a devastating wealth disparity within the United Kingdom, and the rise of populist movements has opened an avenue for fascist ideology to shift from fringe extremists to mainstream discourse within liberal democracies around the globe. Things are, as Woolf says in *Three Guineas*, repeating themselves. Understanding the highly mimetic nature of populist and neoliberal movements and their tendency to scapegoating and sacrifice to assert their boundaries and modes of control is as necessary today's feminism as it was for theirs. That makes Woolf and Carter's work especially relevant today.

As Carter wrote in 1983, "Most intellectual development depends on new readings of old texts" ('Notes from The Front Line', 69), or, as Woolf said in 1929, "books continue each other", and each female author is "the descendant" and inheritor of those who came before (*A Room of One's Own*, 104). A foundation of writing and reading by women is crucial to the continued building of counter-paradigms and alternate praxes necessary for effective social criticism to be formulated and disseminated. Similarly, Shoshana Felman writes in her self-

reflexive study, *What Does a Woman Want? Reading and Sexual Difference*, the thrust of women's writing is "[t]he need to find ways of making connections in the face of difference—the need to stand the ground of that difference and yet to find ways to communicate and even to convey something of it across the gap it creates: the need to speak and to reach out—in speaking and in listening—*across (sexual and other) difference*" (128). Through this parallel study of their respective oeuvres, I have shown how Woolf and Carter ultimately share the political and social goal of being seen and heard as women. Their writing comes as an attempt to communicate the nature of this difference and across this difference. Like Antigone and like Fevvers, the desire to be seen and to be heard is one that is both affirming to themselves as subjects and a call towards a responsibility to respond to others as equally vulnerable to harm.

But, as Woolf knew, educated men's daughters asking questions from the margins will not stop the calls for war in the streets. Neither will simple acknowledgement of one's victim status, as Carter's narratives suggest. Through my synthesis of Woolf, Carter, and Girard, we come to see a praxis of radical inclusion take shape. As feminism as an intellectual and social movement expands to fill the decades ahead, we are charged with examining and speaking across the differences and intersections of oppression which go unrecognized in a community based on exclusion and homogeneity. To this end, while Woolf and Carter's voices have been heard, we must recognize that others have not. To use Theodor Adorno's apt metaphor, "what slips through the net is filtered by the net" (85). While I have examined the writing of women who have redefined the marginalized position of women under a patriarchal, sacrificial culture as a site of resistance, to look to the margins of the margins might yield new ways of being and new methods of resistance which could offer the transcendence from cyclical violence that Girard himself had hoped to see historically realised. The hermeneutics articulated in this thesis may be used and, in turn, further refined by examining its techniques and foci through other marginalised voices and literatures. It is through this thesis that I hope to have continued and to provoke into further continuation what is an increasingly necessary conversation.

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